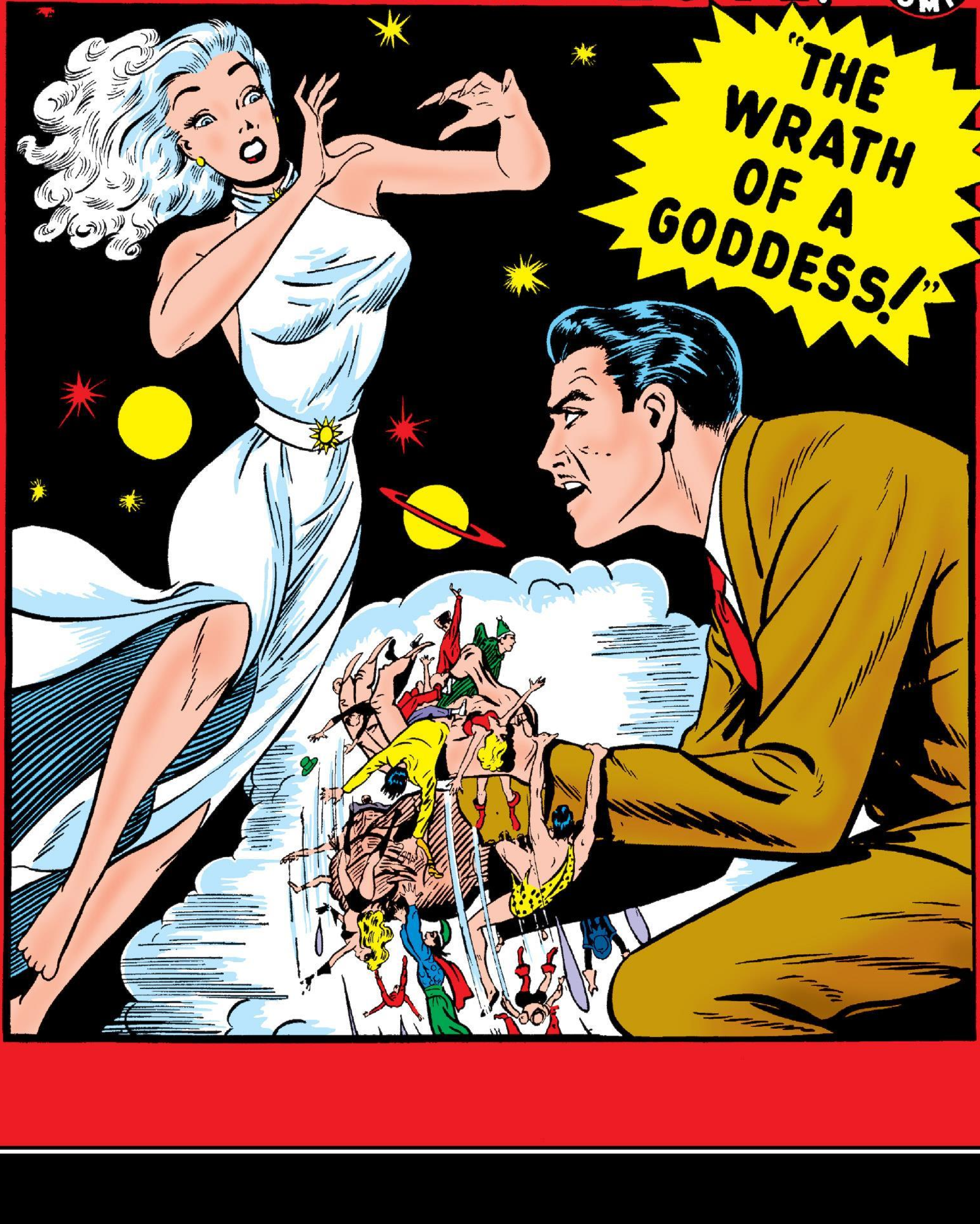
ROMANTIC TALES OF FANTASY!

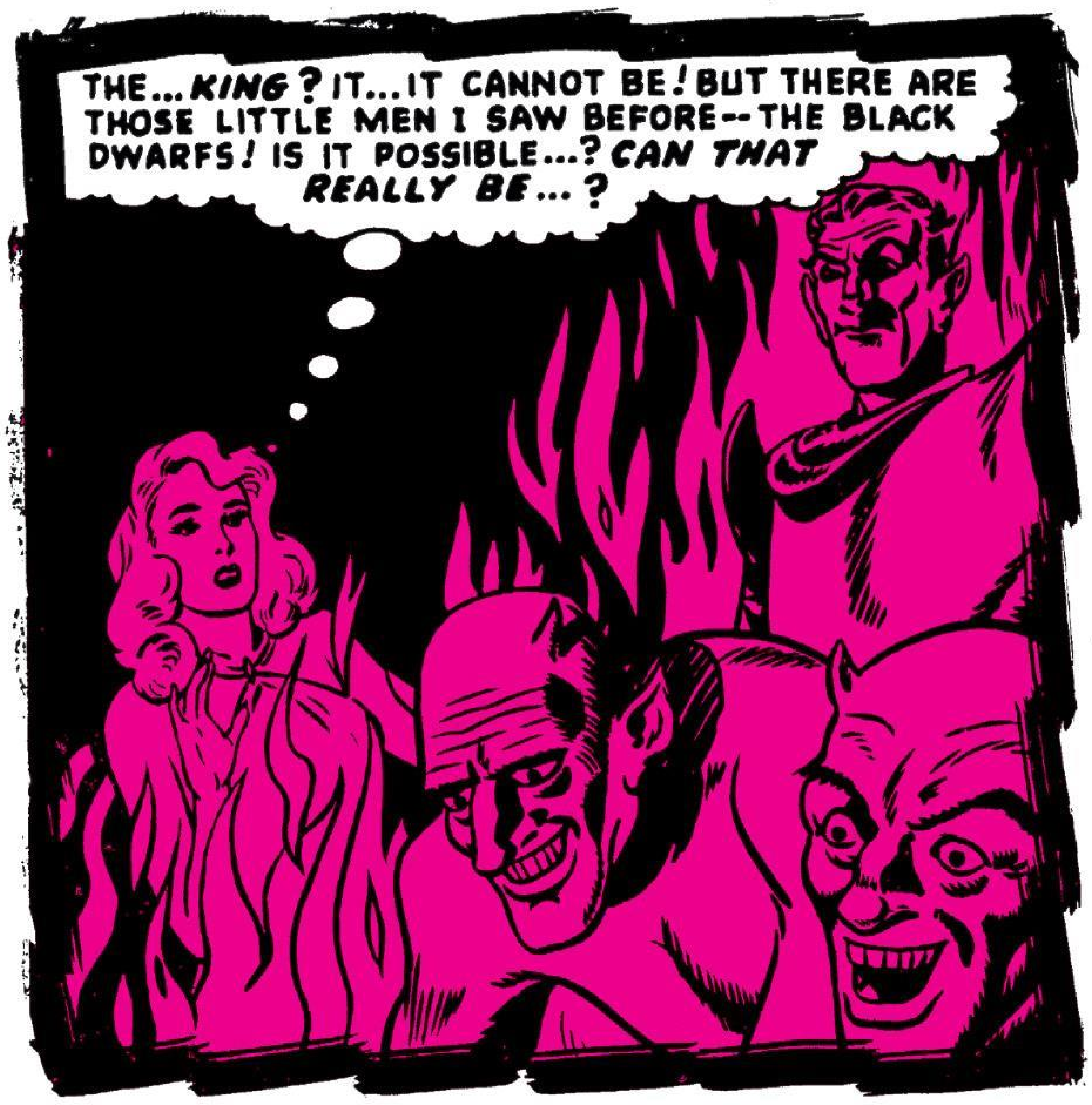
VENUS

AUG.
NO. 6

GODDESS OF LOVE!

MARVEL COMIC


"THE WRATH OF A GODDESS!"


THE...*KING*? IT...IT CANNOT BE! BUT THERE ARE THOSE LITTLE MEN I SAW BEFORE--THE BLACK DWARFS! IS IT POSSIBLE...? *CAN THAT REALLY BE*...?

VENUS

"THE EARTH IS IN *DANGER!*"

CHAPTER ONE

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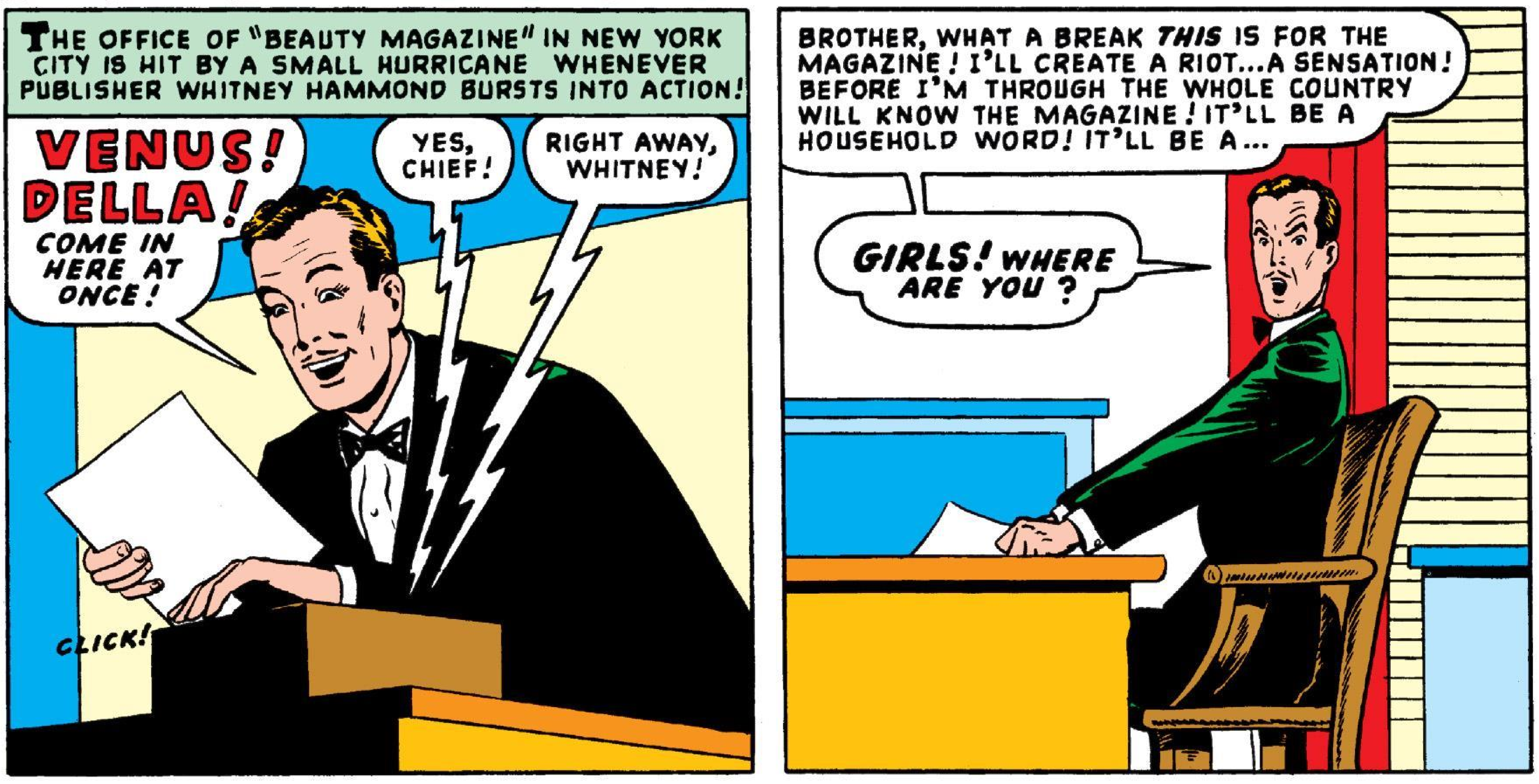
THE OFFICE OF "BEAUTY MAGAZINE" IN NEW YORK CITY IS HIT BY A SMALL HURRICANE WHENEVER PUBLISHER WHITNEY HAMMOND BURSTS INTO ACTION!
VENUS! DELLA! *COME IN HERE AT ONCE!*
YES, CHIEF!
RIGHT AWAY, WHITNEY!
CLICK!
BROTHER, WHAT A BREAK *THIS* IS FOR THE MAGAZINE! I'LL CREATE A RIOT...A SENSATION! BEFORE I'M THROUGH THE WHOLE COUNTRY WILL KNOW THE MAGAZINE! IT'LL BE A HOUSEHOLD WORD! IT'LL BE A...
GIRLS! WHERE ARE YOU?
WHITNEY'S SECRETARY, DELLA, AND VENUS, HIS EDITOR, ENTER...CREATING THEIR USUAL EFFECT...
HERE WE ARE, CHIEF! I CAME THE *INSTANT* YOU CALLED!
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU... OH!...HELLO, VENUS!
HELLO, WHITNEY...
FOR GOODNESS SAKE! THERE HE GOES AGAIN! EVERY TIME HE SETS EYES ON VENUS, HE GOES INTO THAT MOONSTRUCK TRANCE! WHAT'S *SHE* GOT THAT *I* HAVEN'T?
♥ ♥ HMMM...
1

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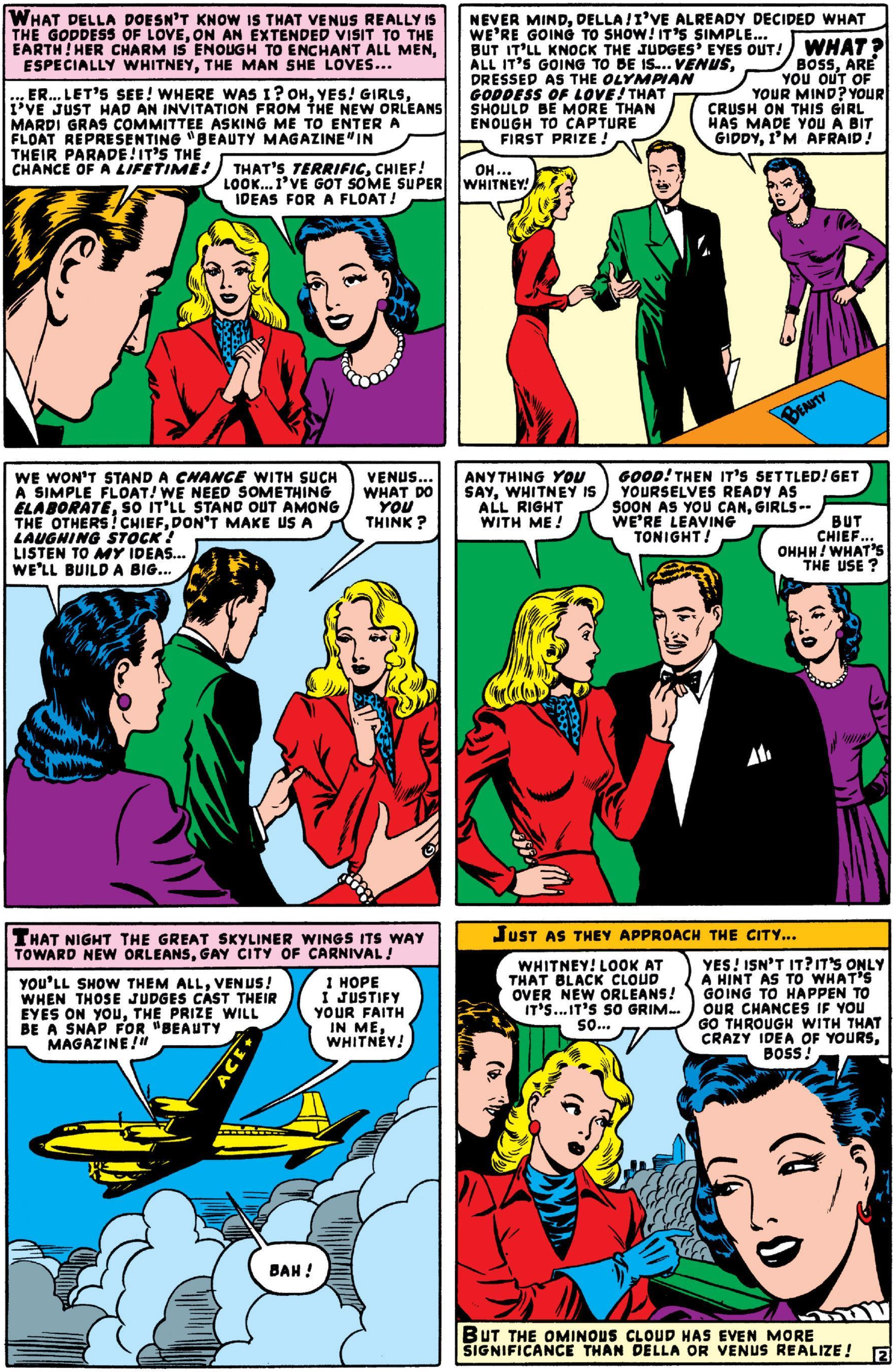
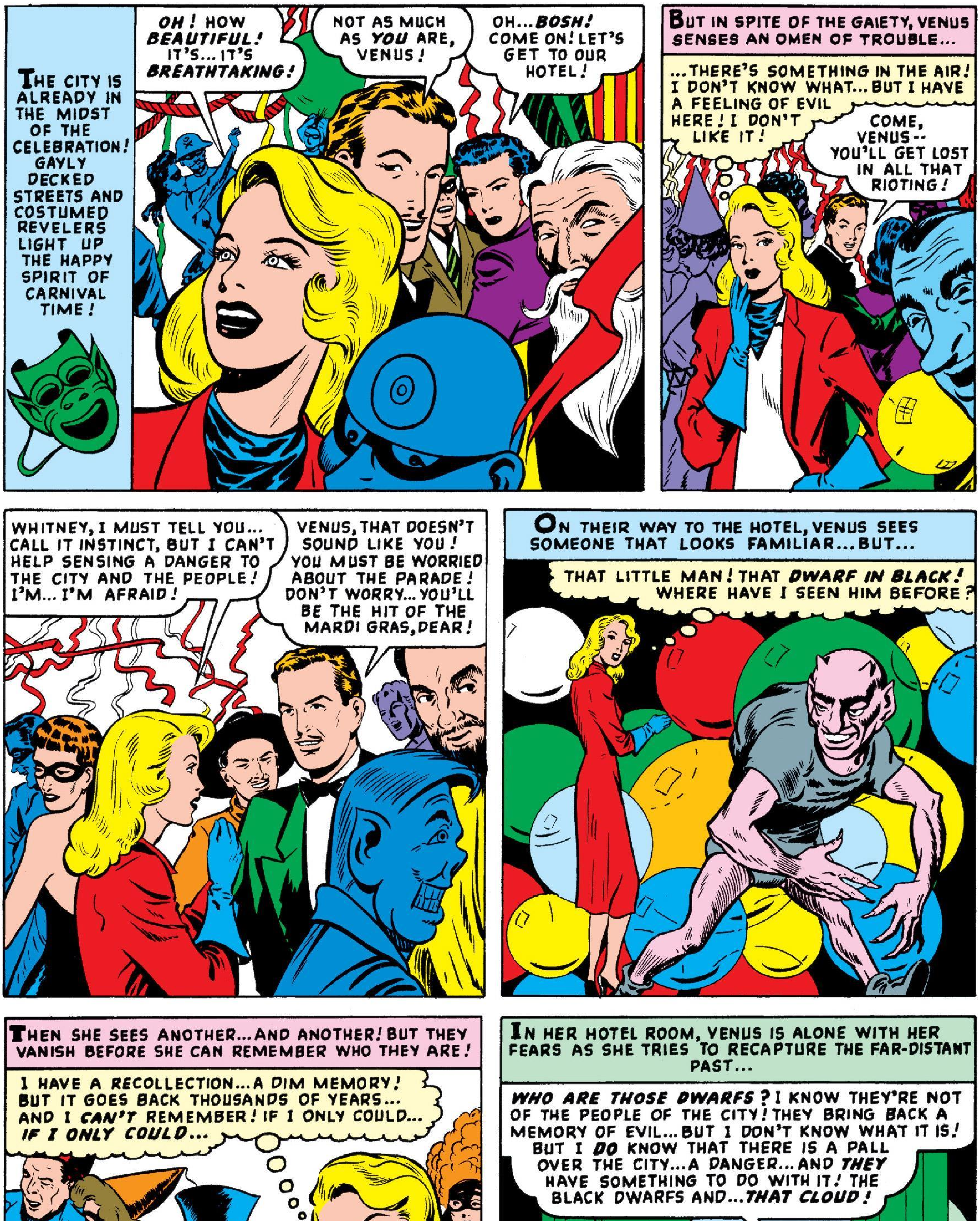
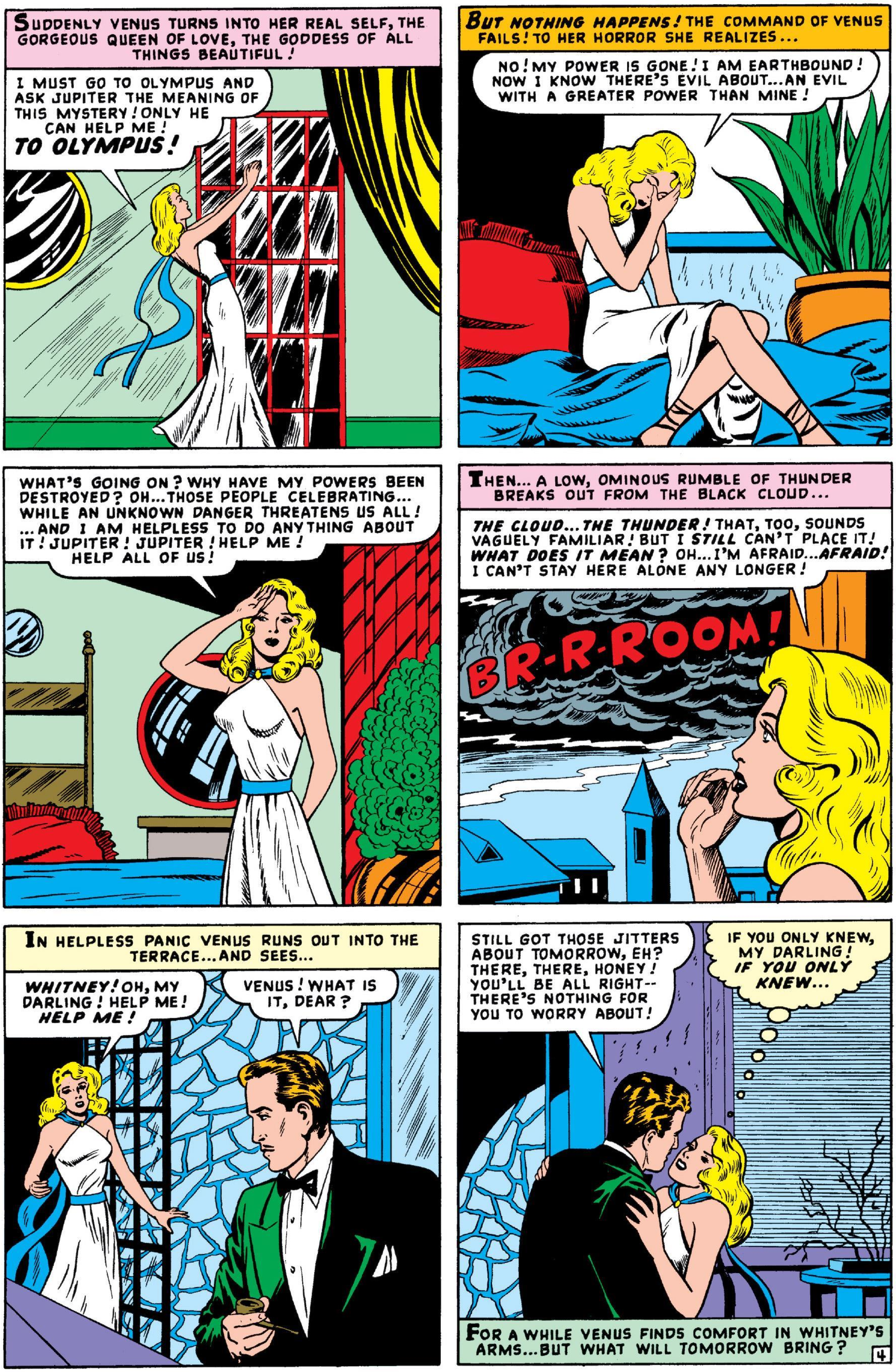
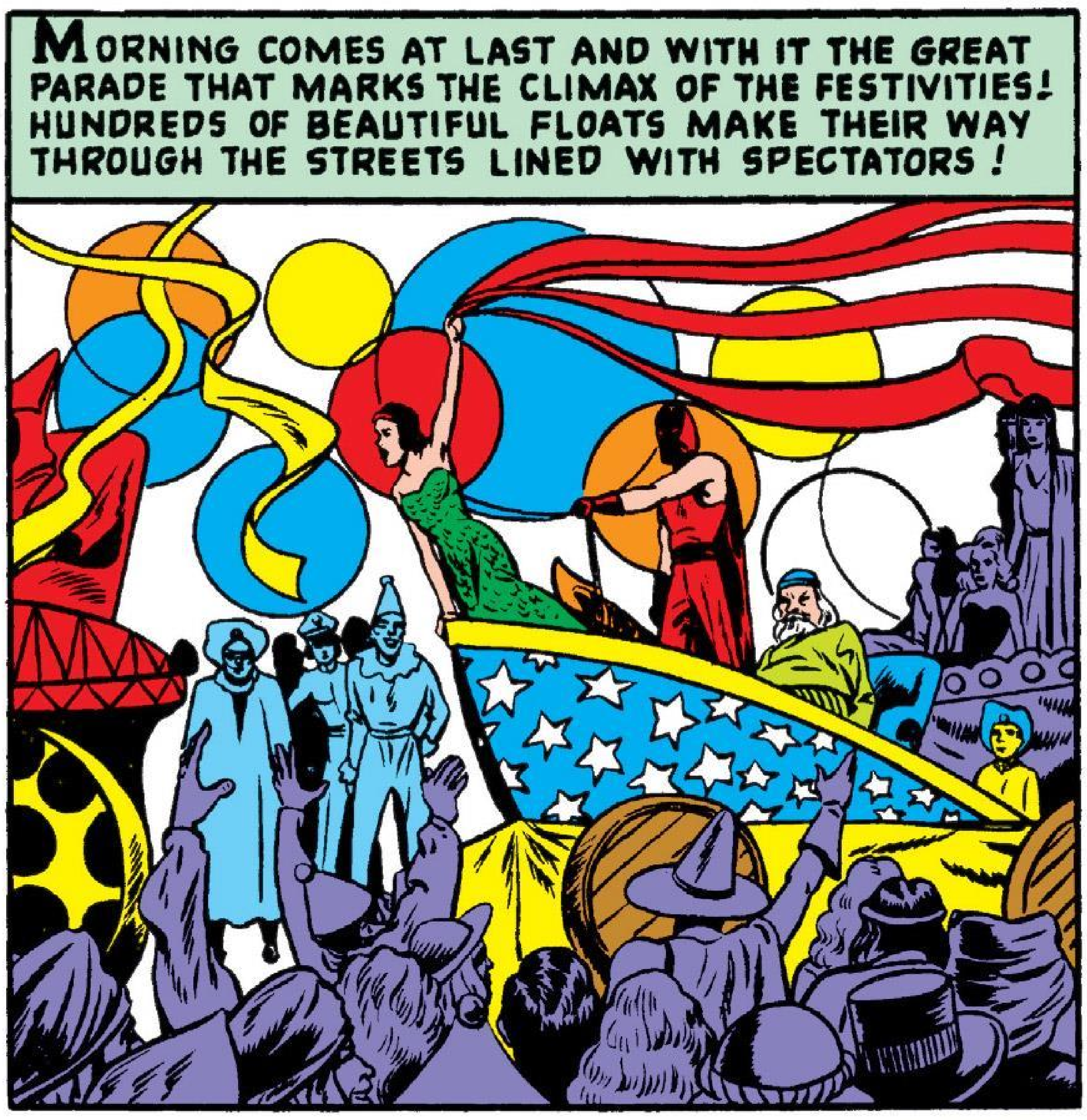
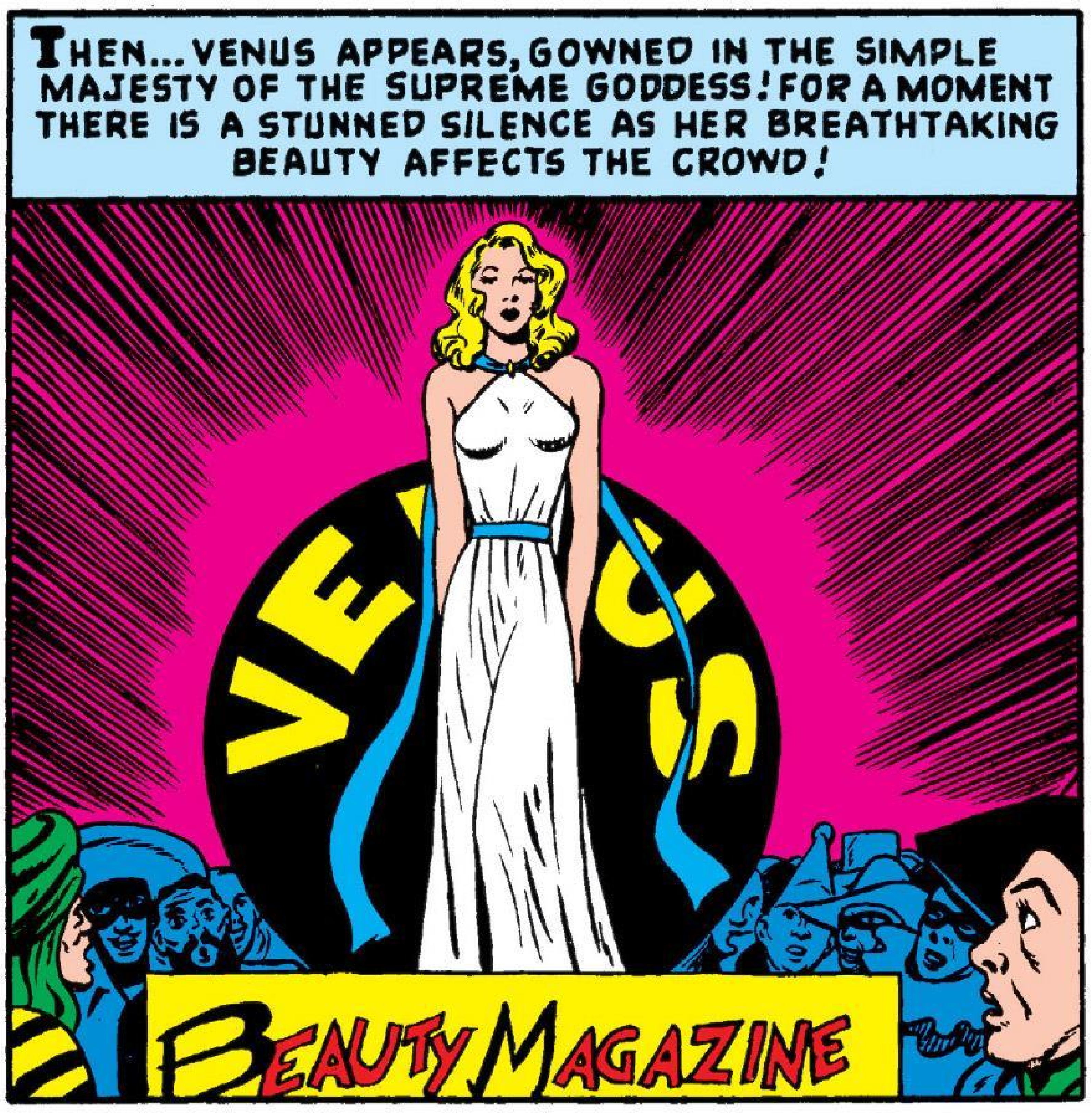
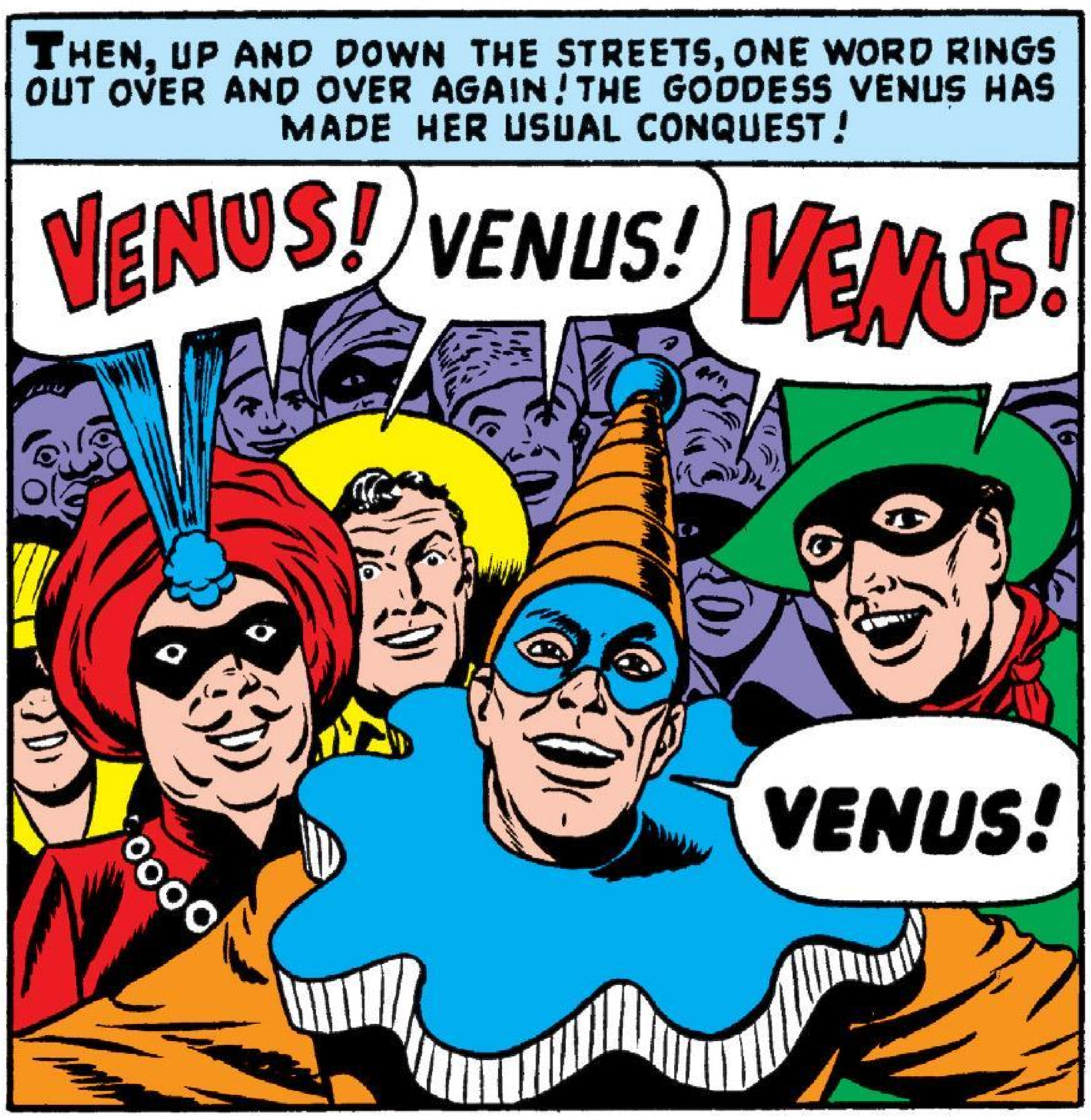

WHAT DELLA DOESN'T KNOW IS THAT VENUS REALLY IS THE GODDESS OF LOVE, ON AN EXTENDED VISIT TO THE EARTH! HER CHARM IS ENOUGH TO ENCHANT ALL MEN, ESPECIALLY WHITNEY, THE MAN SHE LOVES...
...ER...LET'S SEE! WHERE WAS I? OH, YES! GIRLS, I'VE JUST HAD AN INVITATION FROM THE NEW ORLEANS MARDI GRAS COMMITTEE ASKING ME TO ENTER A FLOAT REPRESENTING "BEAUTY MAGAZINE" IN THEIR PARADE! IT'S THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME!
THAT'S TERRIFIC, CHIEF! LOOK...I'VE GOT SOME SUPER IDEAS FOR A FLOAT!
NEVER MIND, DELLA! I'VE ALREADY DECIDED WHAT WE'RE GOING TO SHOW! IT'S SIMPLE... BUT IT'LL KNOCK THE JUDGES' EYES OUT! ALL IT'S GOING TO BE IS... VENUS, DRESSED AS THE OLYMPIAN GODDESS OF LOVE! THAT SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO CAPTURE FIRST PRIZE!
WHAT? BOSS, ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? YOUR CRUSH ON THIS GIRL HAS MADE YOU A BIT GIDDY, I'M AFRAID!
OH... WHITNEY!
BEAUTY
WE WON'T STAND A CHANCE WITH SUCH A SIMPLE FLOAT! WE NEED SOMETHING ELABORATE, SO IT'LL STAND OUT AMONG THE OTHERS! CHIEF, DON'T MAKE US A LAUGHING STOCK! LISTEN TO MY IDEAS... WE'LL BUILD A BIG...
VENUS... WHAT DO YOU THINK?
ANYTHING YOU SAY, WHITNEY IS ALL RIGHT WITH ME!
GOOD! THEN IT'S SETTLED! GET YOURSELVES READY AS SOON AS YOU CAN, GIRLS -- WE'RE LEAVING TONIGHT!
BUT CHIEF... OHHH! WHAT'S THE USE?
THAT NIGHT THE GREAT SKYLINER WINGS ITS WAY TOWARD NEW ORLEANS, GAY CITY OF CARNIVAL!
YOU'LL SHOW THEM ALL, VENUS! WHEN THOSE JUDGES CAST THEIR EYES ON YOU, THE PRIZE WILL BE A SNAP FOR "BEAUTY MAGAZINE!"
I HOPE I JUSTIFY YOUR FAITH IN ME, WHITNEY!
ACE
BAH!
JUST AS THEY APPROACH THE CITY...
WHITNEY! LOOK AT THAT BLACK CLOUD OVER NEW ORLEANS! IT'S...IT'S SO GRIM... SO...
YES! ISN'T IT? IT'S ONLY A HINT AS TO WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO OUR CHANCES IF YOU GO THROUGH WITH THAT CRAZY IDEA OF YOURS, BOSS!
BUT THE OMINOUS CLOUD HAS EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANCE THAN DELLA OR VENUS REALIZE!

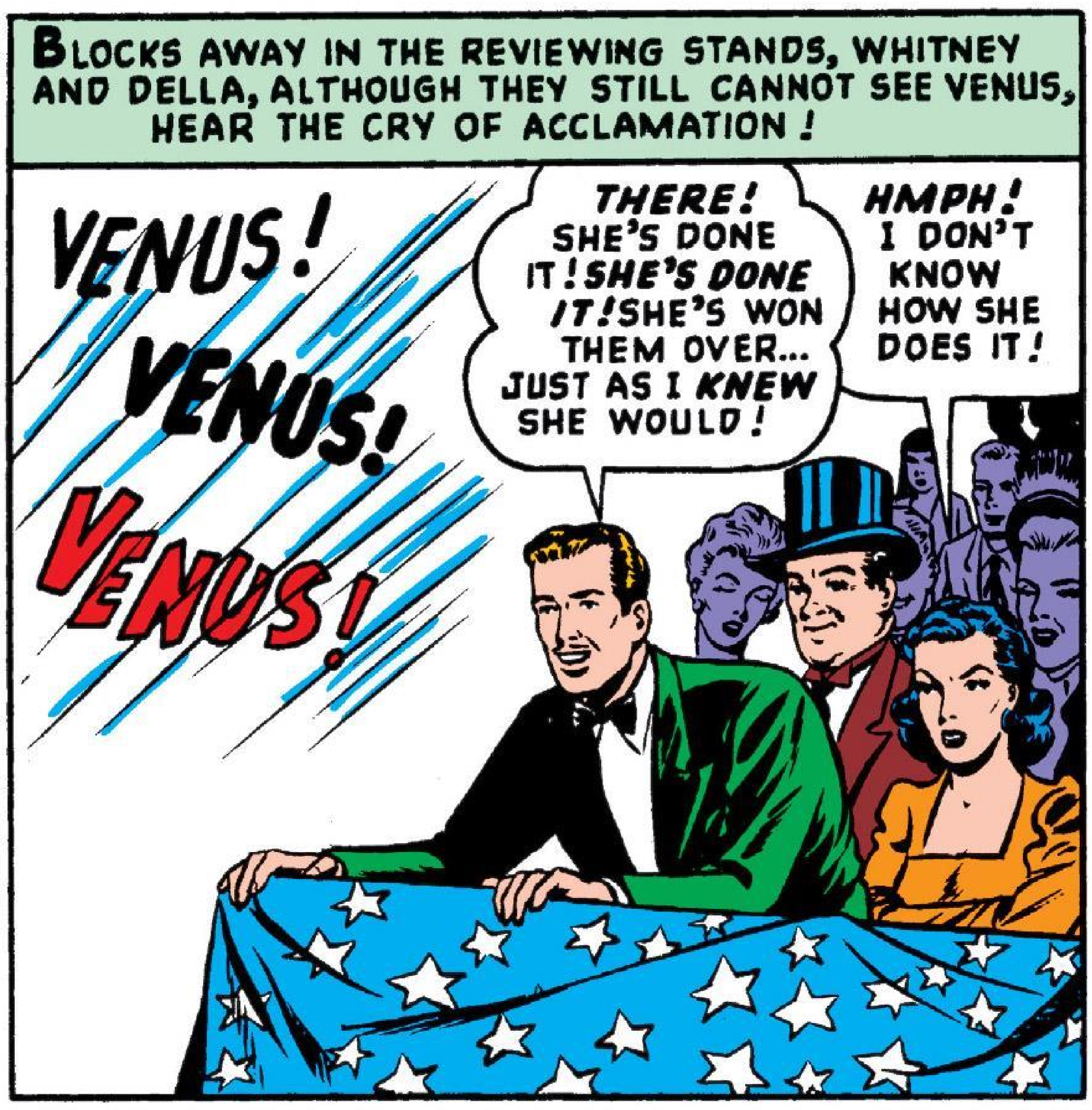

THE CITY IS ALREADY IN THE MIDST OF THE CELEBRATION! GAYLY DECKED STREETS AND COSTUMED REVELERS LIGHT UP THE HAPPY SPIRIT OF CARNIVAL TIME!
OH! HOW BEAUTIFUL! IT'S... IT'S BREATHTAKING!
NOT AS MUCH AS YOU ARE, VENUS!
OH... BOSH! COME ON! LET'S GET TO OUR HOTEL!
BUT IN SPITE OF THE GAIETY, VENUS SENSES AN OMEN OF TROUBLE...
...THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE AIR! I DON'T KNOW WHAT... BUT I HAVE A FEELING OF EVIL HERE! I DON'T LIKE IT!
COME, VENUS -- YOU'LL GET LOST IN ALL THAT RIOTING!
WHITNEY, I MUST TELL YOU... CALL IT INSTINCT, BUT I CAN'T HELP SENSING A DANGER TO THE CITY AND THE PEOPLE! I'M... I'M AFRAID!
VENUS, THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU! YOU MUST BE WORRIED ABOUT THE PARADE! DON'T WORRY... YOU'LL BE THE HIT OF THE MARDI GRAS, DEAR!
ON THEIR WAY TO THE HOTEL, VENUS SEES SOMEONE THAT LOOKS FAMILIAR... BUT...
THAT LITTLE MAN! THAT DWARF IN BLACK! WHERE HAVE I SEEN HIM BEFORE?
THEN SHE SEES ANOTHER... AND ANOTHER! BUT THEY VANISH BEFORE SHE CAN REMEMBER WHO THEY ARE!
I HAVE A RECOLLECTION... A DIM MEMORY! BUT IT GOES BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS... AND I CAN'T REMEMBER! IF I ONLY COULD... IF I ONLY COULD...
IN HER HOTEL ROOM, VENUS IS ALONE WITH HER FEARS AS SHE TRIES TO RECAPTURE THE FAR-DISTANT PAST...
WHO ARE THOSE DWARFS? I KNOW THEY'RE NOT OF THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY! THEY BRING BACK A MEMORY OF EVIL... BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS! BUT I DO KNOW THAT THERE IS A PALL OVER THE CITY... A DANGER... AND THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT! THE BLACK DWARFS AND... THAT CLOUD!

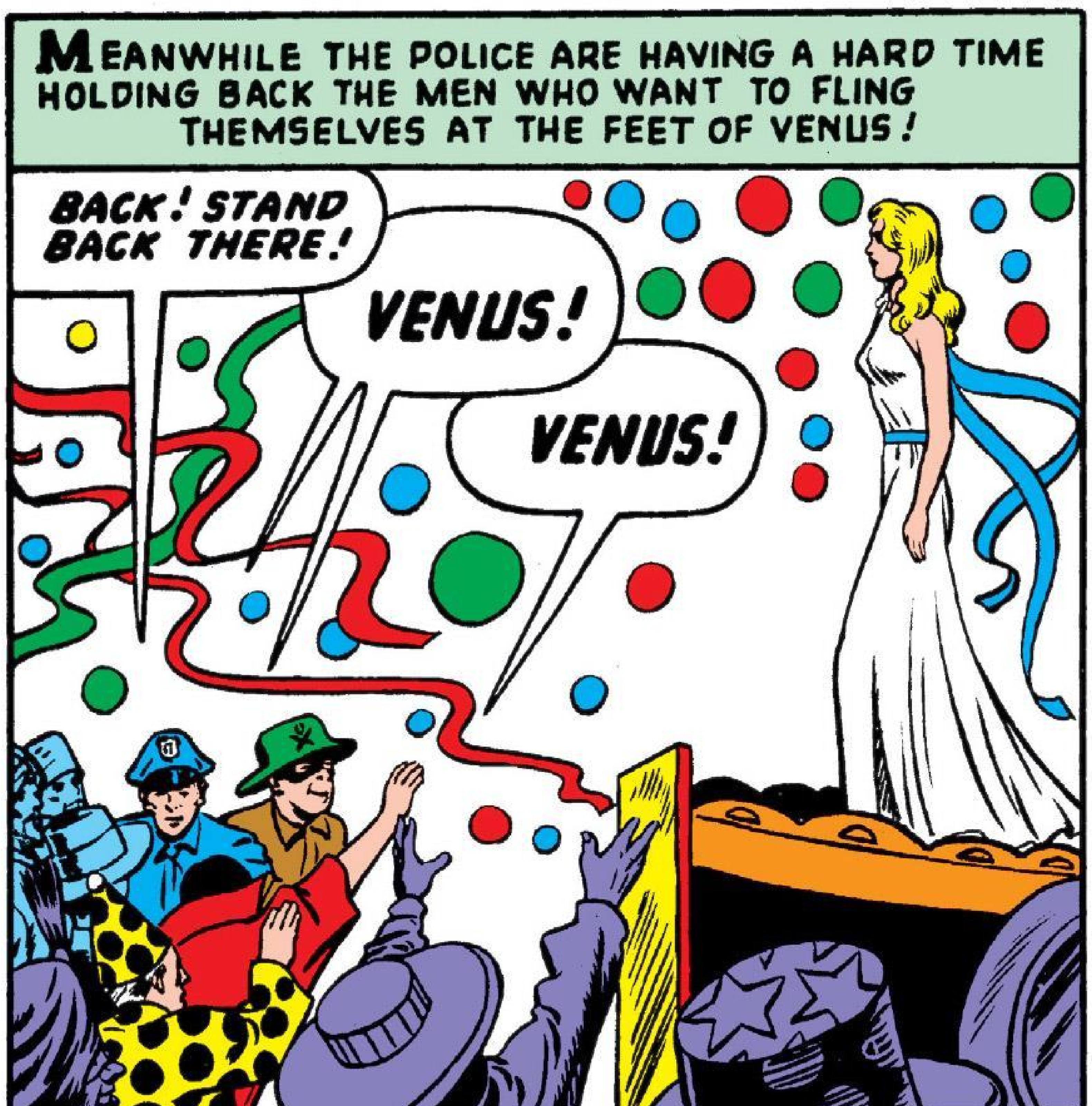

SUDDENLY VENUS TURNS INTO HER REAL SELF, THE GORGEOUS QUEEN OF LOVE, THE GODDESS OF ALL THINGS BEAUTIFUL!
I MUST GO TO OLYMPUS AND ASK JUPITER THE MEANING OF THIS MYSTERY! ONLY HE CAN HELP ME! **TO OLYMPUS!**
BUT NOTHING HAPPENS! THE COMMAND OF VENUS FAILS! TO HER HORROR SHE REALIZES...
NO! MY POWER IS GONE! I AM EARTHBOUND! NOW I KNOW THERE'S EVIL ABOUT...AN EVIL WITH A GREATER POWER THAN MINE!
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY HAVE MY POWERS BEEN DESTROYED? OH...THOSE PEOPLE CELEBRATING... WHILE AN UNKNOWN DANGER THREATENS US ALL! ...AND I AM HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT! JUPITER! JUPITER! HELP ME! HELP ALL OF US!
THEN... A LOW, OMINOUS RUMBLE OF THUNDER BREAKS OUT FROM THE BLACK CLOUD...
THE CLOUD...THE THUNDER! THAT, TOO, SOUNDS VAGUELY FAMILIAR! BUT I ***STILL*** CAN'T PLACE IT! ***WHAT DOES IT MEAN?*** OH...I'M AFRAID...***AFRAID!*** I CAN'T STAY HERE ALONE ANY LONGER!
BR-R-ROOM!
IN HELPLESS PANIC VENUS RUNS OUT INTO THE TERRACE...AND SEES...
WHITNEY! OH, MY DARLING! HELP ME! ***HELP ME!***
VENUS! WHAT IS IT, DEAR?
STILL GOT THOSE JITTERS ABOUT TOMORROW, EH? THERE, THERE, HONEY! YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT-- THERE'S NOTHING FOR YOU TO WORRY ABOUT!
IF YOU ONLY KNEW, MY DARLING! ***IF YOU ONLY KNEW...***
FOR A WHILE VENUS FINDS COMFORT IN WHITNEY'S ARMS...BUT WHAT WILL TOMORROW BRING?

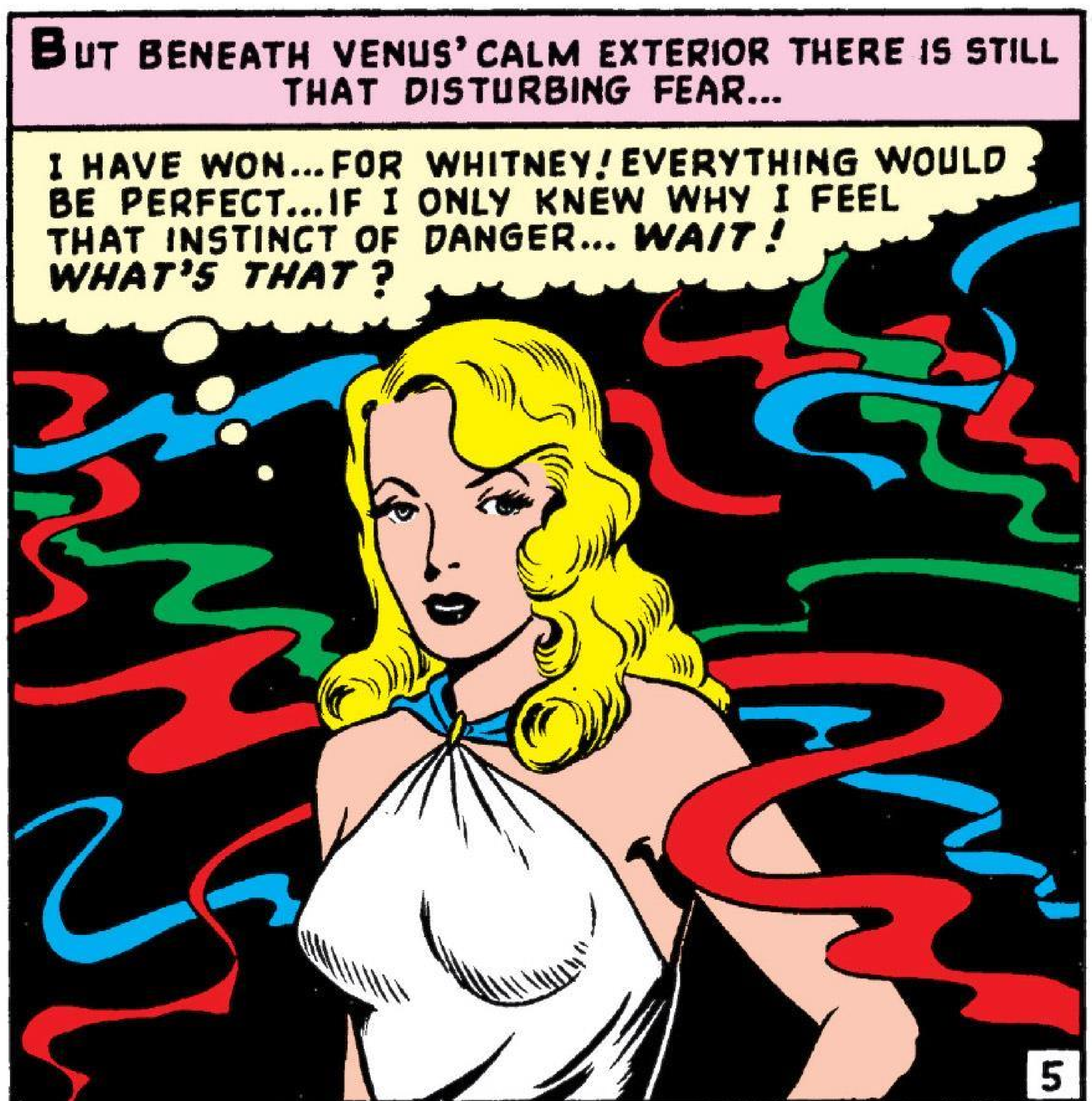

MORNING COMES AT LAST AND WITH IT THE GREAT PARADE THAT MARKS THE CLIMAX OF THE FESTIVITIES! HUNDREDS OF BEAUTIFUL FLOATS MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE STREETS LINED WITH SPECTATORS!

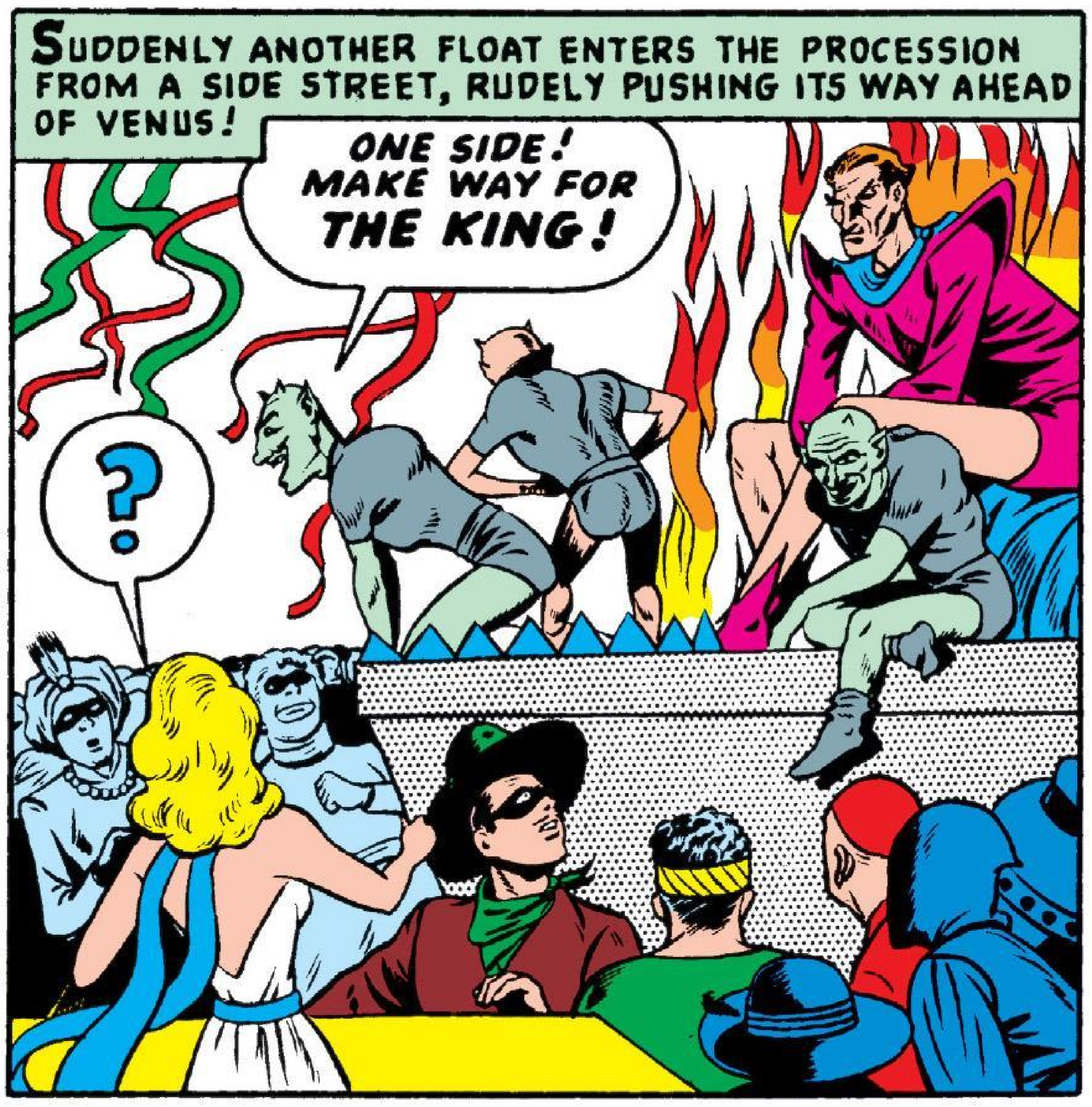

THEN... VENUS APPEARS, GOWNED IN THE SIMPLE MAJESTY OF THE SUPREME GODDESS! FOR A MOMENT THERE IS A STUNNED SILENCE AS HER BREATHTAKING BEAUTY AFFECTS THE CROWD!
BEAUTY MAGAZINE

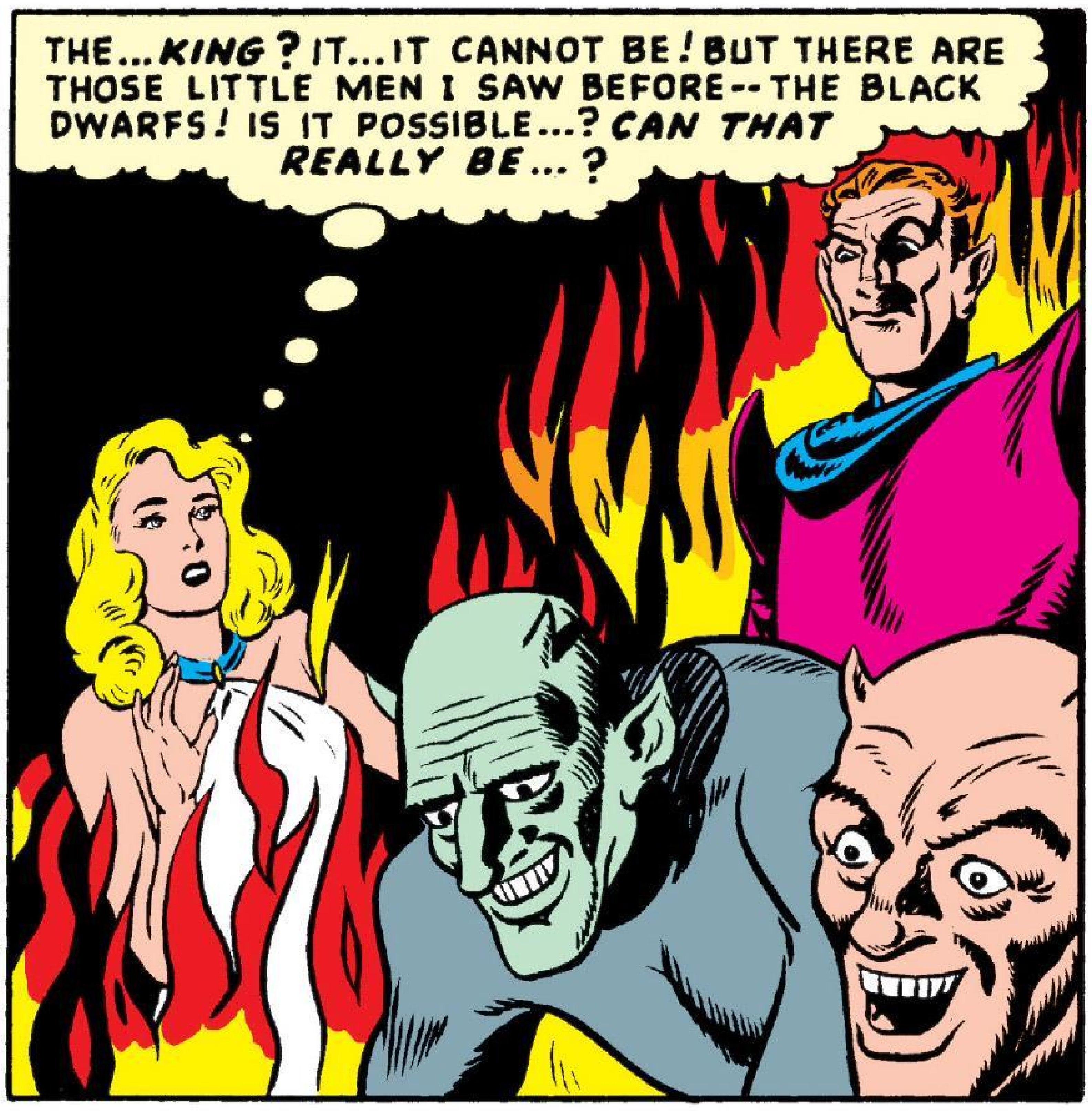

THEN, UP AND DOWN THE STREETS, ONE WORD RINGS OUT OVER AND OVER AGAIN! THE GODDESS VENUS HAS MADE HER USUAL CONQUEST!
VENUS!
VENUS!
VENUS!
VENUS!

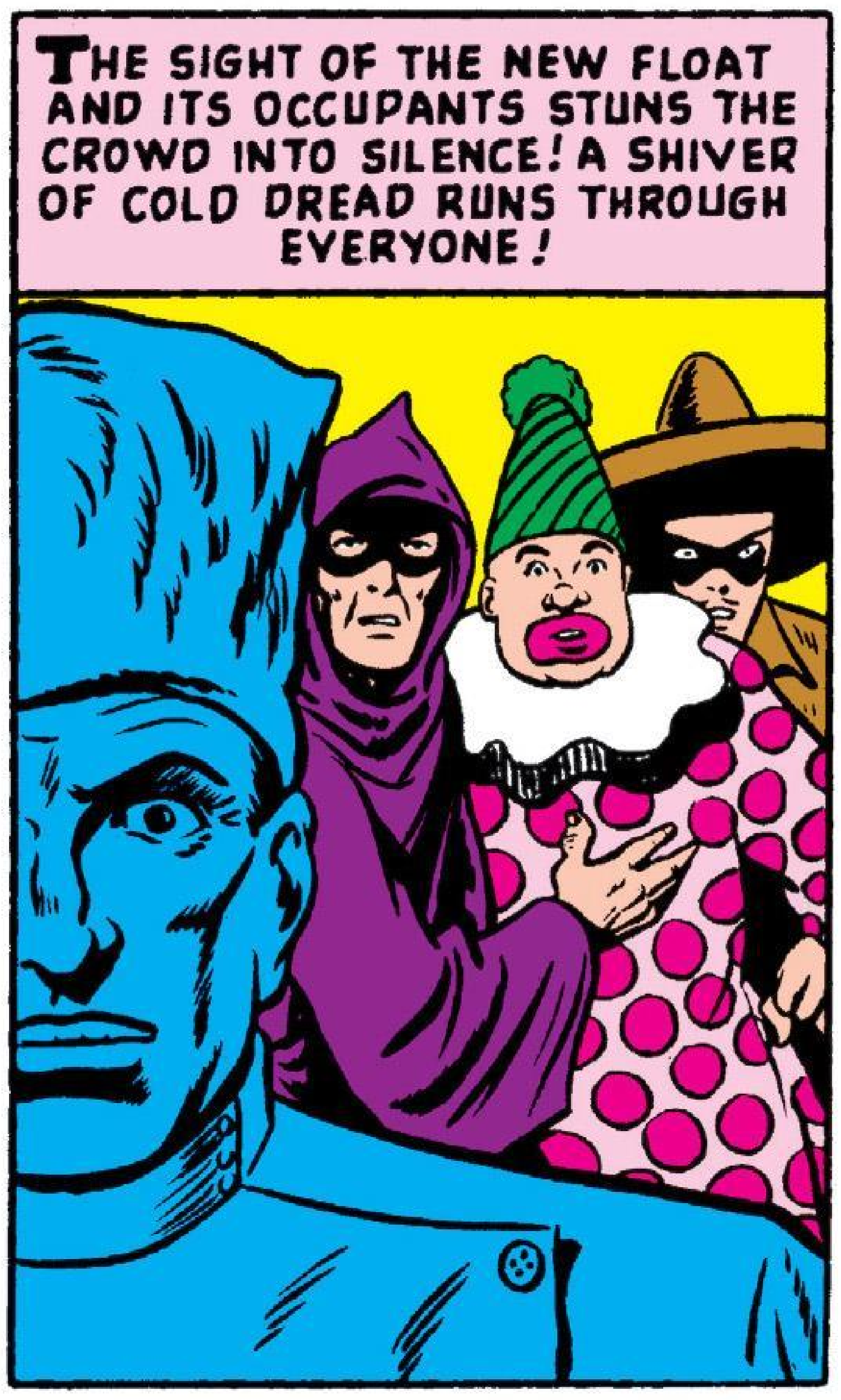

BLOCKS AWAY IN THE REVIEWING STANDS, WHITNEY AND DELLA, ALTHOUGH THEY STILL CANNOT SEE VENUS, HEAR THE CRY OF ACCLAMATION!
VENUS!
VENUS!
VENUS!
THERE! SHE'S DONE IT! SHE'S DONE IT! SHE'S WON THEM OVER... JUST AS I KNEW SHE WOULD!
HMPH! I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE DOES IT!

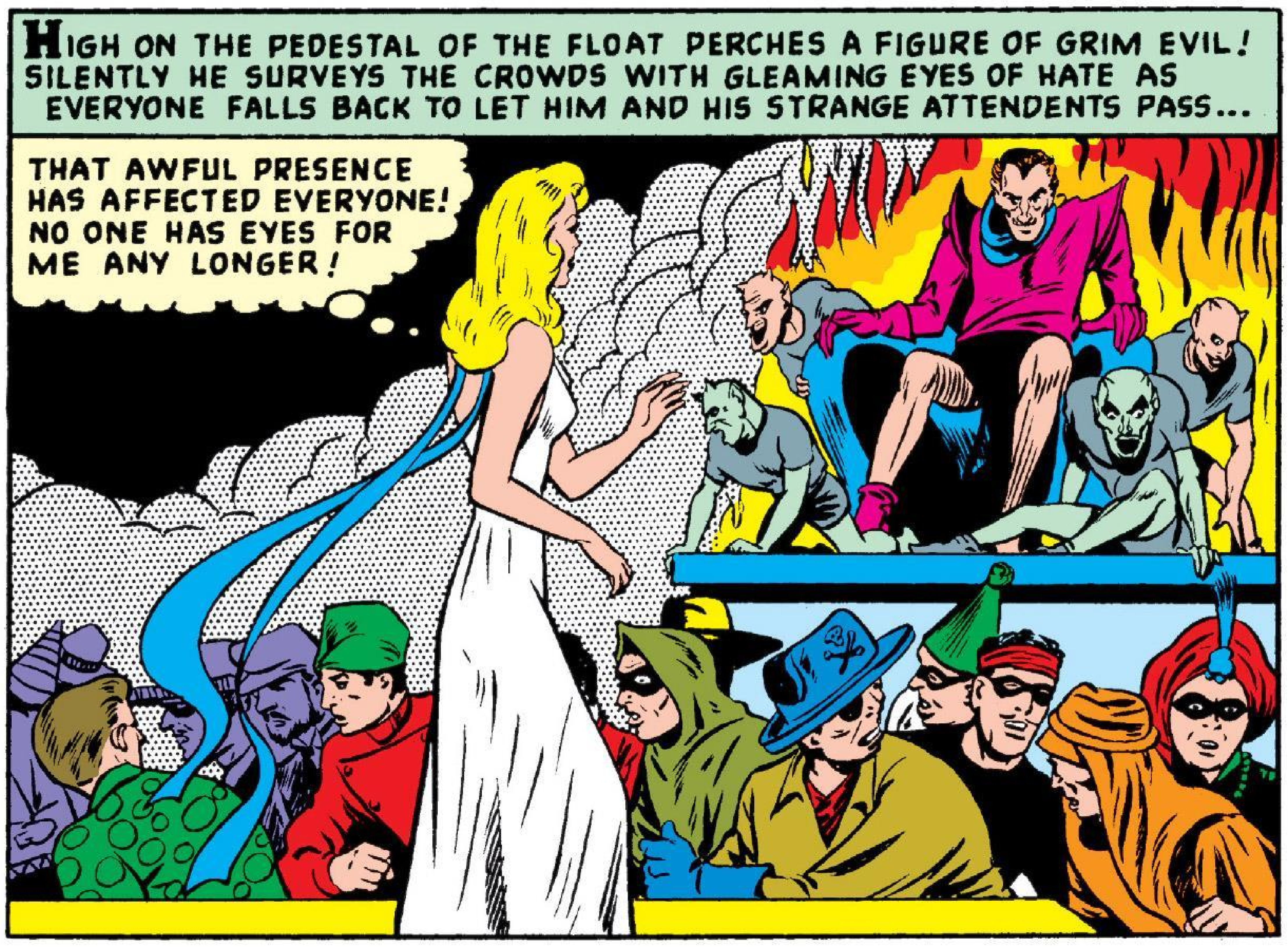

MEANWHILE THE POLICE ARE HAVING A HARD TIME HOLDING BACK THE MEN WHO WANT TO FLING THEMSELVES AT THE FEET OF VENUS!
BACK! STAND BACK THERE!
VENUS!
VENUS!

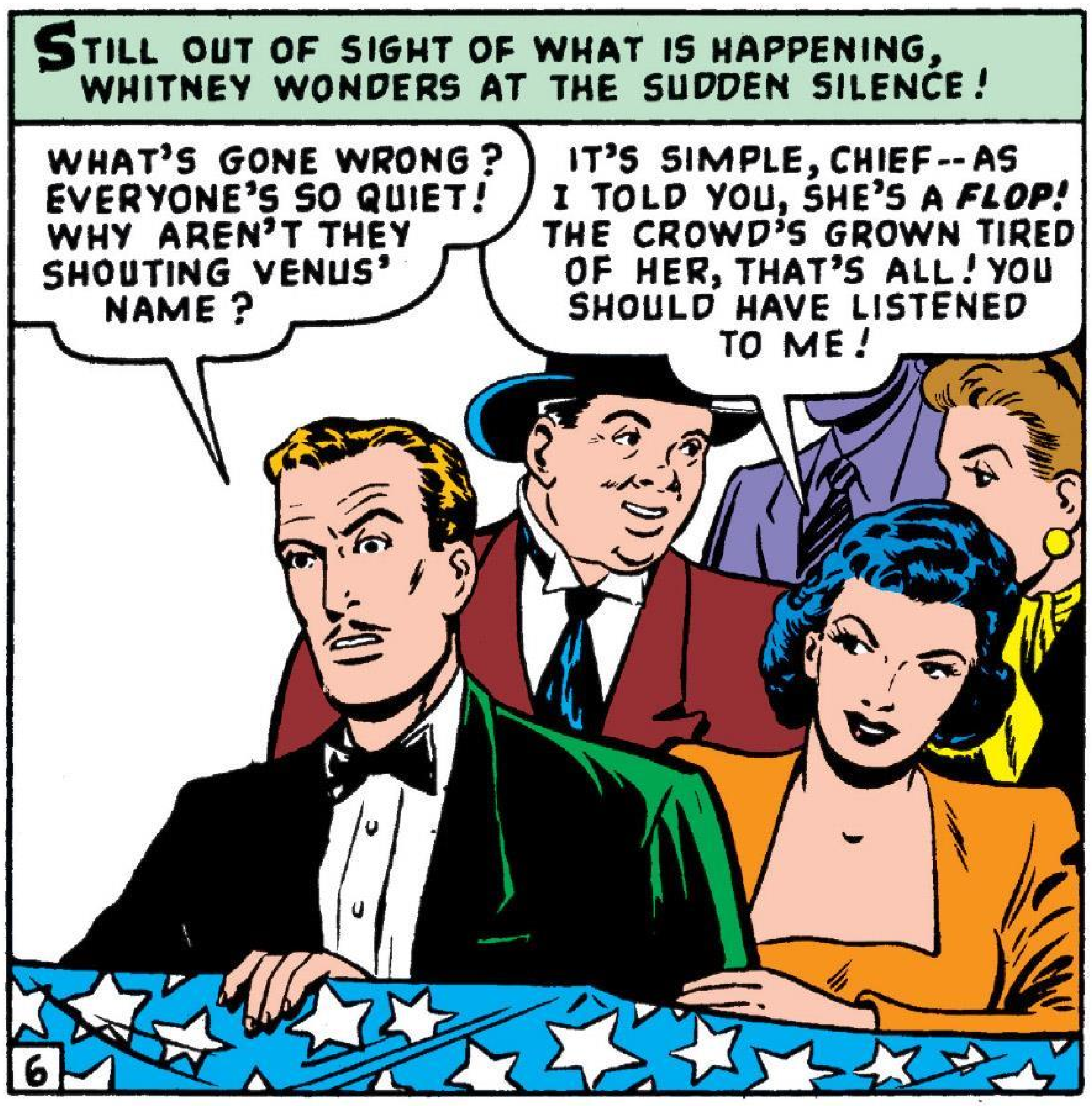

BUT BENEATH VENUS' CALM EXTERIOR THERE IS STILL THAT DISTURBING FEAR...
I HAVE WON... FOR WHITNEY! EVERYTHING WOULD BE PERFECT... IF I ONLY KNEW WHY I FEEL THAT INSTINCT OF DANGER... WAIT! WHAT'S THAT?

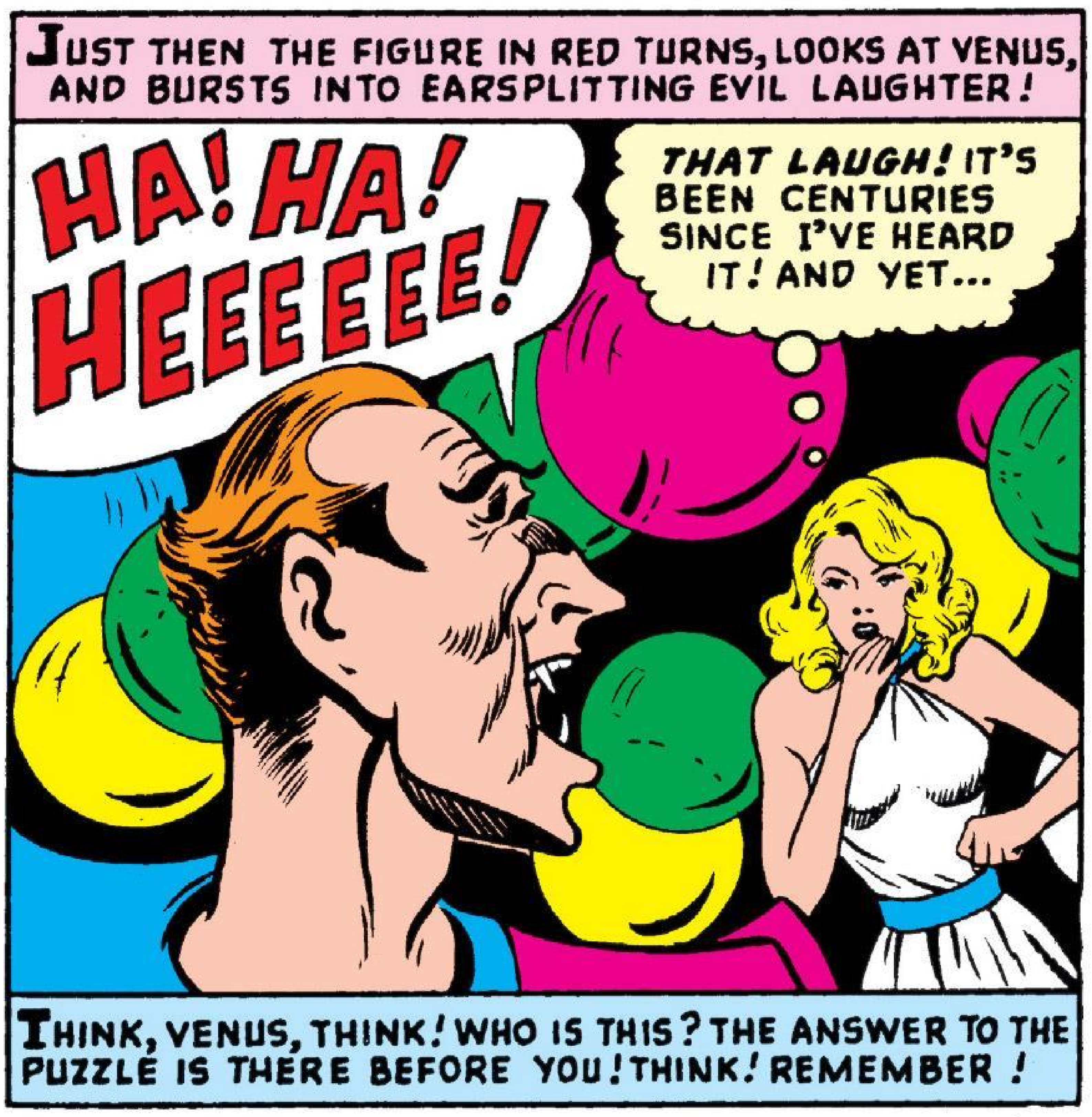

SUDDENLY ANOTHER FLOAT ENTERS THE PROCESSION FROM A SIDE STREET, RUDELY PUSHING ITS WAY AHEAD OF VENUS!
ONE SIDE! MAKE WAY FOR *THE KING!*
?


THE... *KING?* IT... IT CANNOT BE! BUT THERE ARE THOSE LITTLE MEN I SAW BEFORE -- THE BLACK DWARFS! IS IT POSSIBLE...? *CAN THAT REALLY BE...?*


THE SIGHT OF THE NEW FLOAT AND ITS OCCUPANTS STUNS THE CROWD INTO SILENCE! A SHIVER OF COLD DREAD RUNS THROUGH EVERYONE!


HIGH ON THE PEDESTAL OF THE FLOAT PERCHES A FIGURE OF GRIM EVIL! SILENTLY HE SURVEYS THE CROWDS WITH GLEAMING EYES OF HATE AS EVERYONE FALLS BACK TO LET HIM AND HIS STRANGE ATTENDENTS PASS...
THAT AWFUL PRESENCE HAS AFFECTED EVERYONE! NO ONE HAS EYES FOR ME ANY LONGER!


STILL OUT OF SIGHT OF WHAT IS HAPPENING, WHITNEY WONDERS AT THE SUDDEN SILENCE!
WHAT'S GONE WRONG? EVERYONE'S SO QUIET! WHY AREN'T THEY SHOUTING VENUS' NAME?
IT'S SIMPLE, CHIEF -- AS I TOLD YOU, SHE'S A *FLOP!* THE CROWD'S GROWN TIRED OF HER, THAT'S ALL! YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO ME!

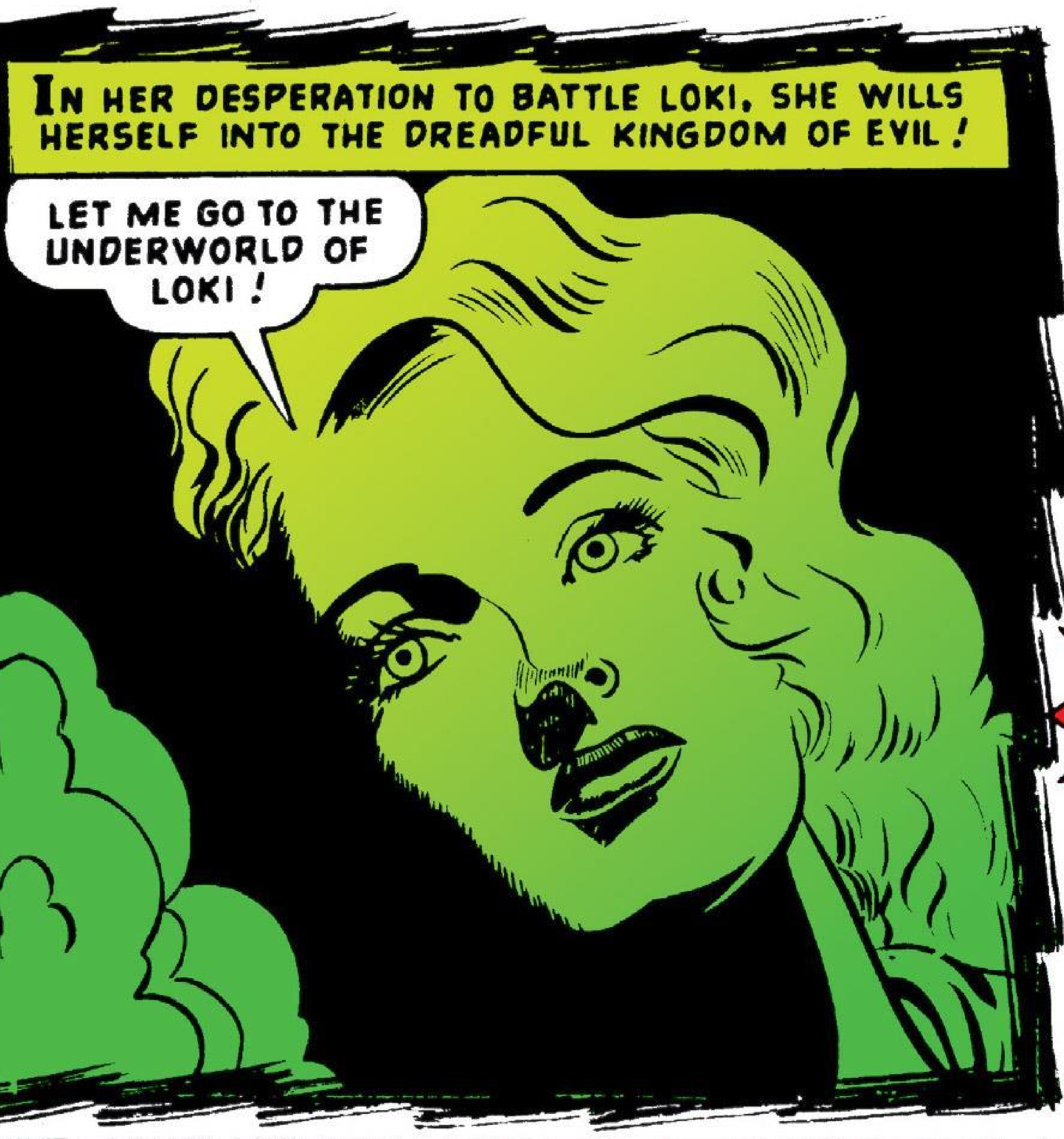

JUST THEN THE FIGURE IN RED TURNS, LOOKS AT VENUS, AND BURSTS INTO EARSPLITTING EVIL LAUGHTER!
HA! HA! HEEEEEE!
THAT LAUGH! IT'S BEEN CENTURIES SINCE I'VE HEARD IT! AND YET...
THINK, VENUS, THINK! WHO IS THIS? THE ANSWER TO THE PUZZLE IS THERE BEFORE YOU! THINK! REMEMBER!

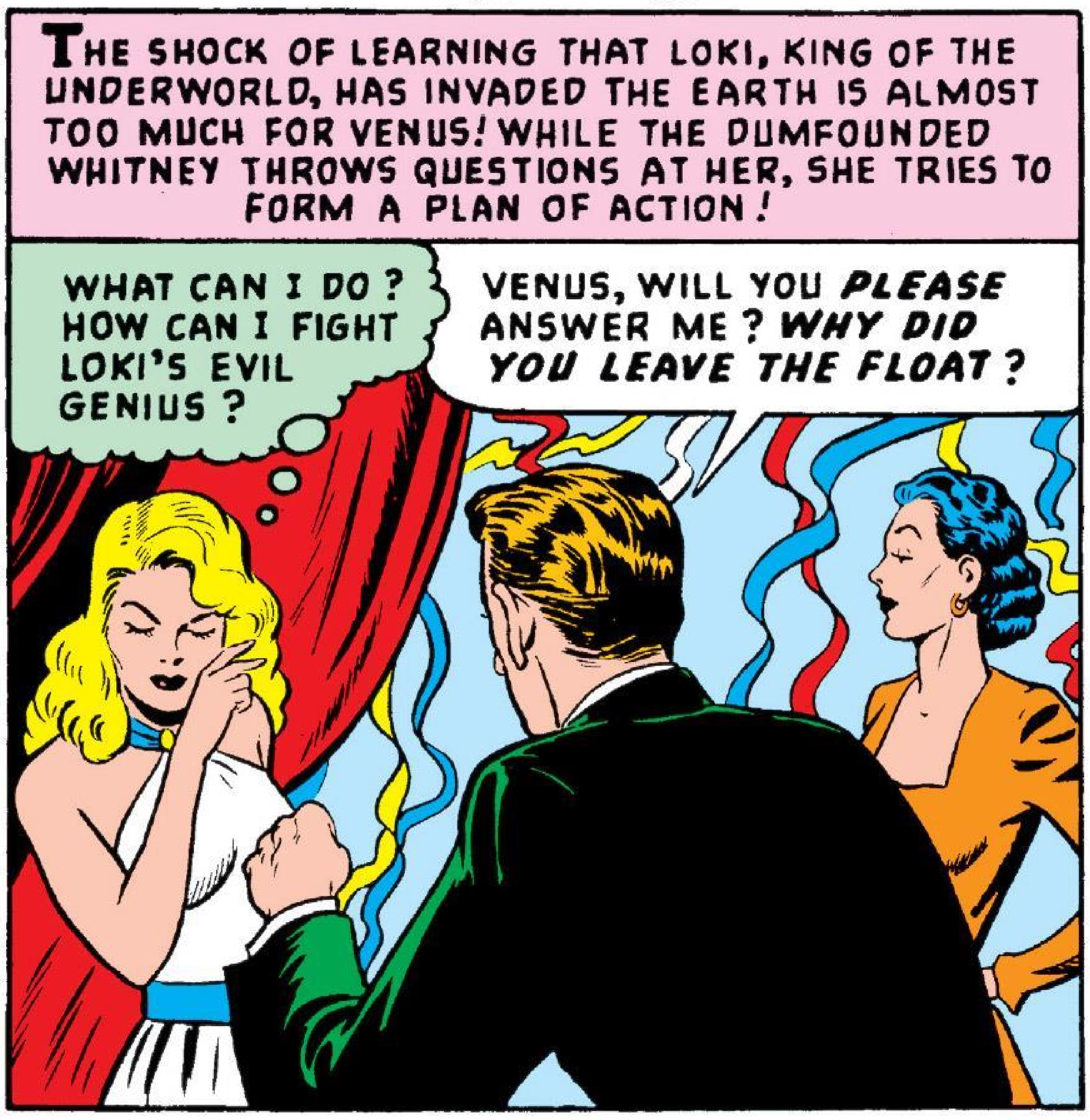
LOKI! THE KING OF THE LOWER REGIONS... THE PRINCE OF EVIL! IT MUST BE HE! BUT... HE WAS BANISHED FOREVER TO THE UNDERWORLD! HE CANNOT LEAVE HIS EXILE AND SET FOOT ON EARTH! AND YET...
THEN... AS SUDDENLY AS IT CAME, THE STRANGE FLOAT VANISHES JUST AS IT APPROACHES THE REVIEWING STAND! THE CROWD IS FLABBERGASTED AT THIS!
WHAT THE...
HEY! WHERE'D IT GO?
NEVER MIND THAT! WHAT WAS IT?
BRRRR! IT GAVE ME THE CREEPS!
IT CAN'T BE LOKI! IT WAS JUST ANOTHER ENTRY, I'M SURE -- BUT I'M GOING TO FIND OUT!
REVIEWING STA
JUDGES' BOX
NUS
BEAUTY MAGAZINE
VENUS! SHE'S LEFT THE FLOAT! THAT DISQUALIFIES HER AS A CONTESTANT!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU, BOSS? NOW "BEAUTY MAGAZINE" WILL BE THE LAUGHING STOCK OF THE COUNTRY! NEXT TIME LISTEN TO LITTLE DELLA!
VENUS RUSHES OVER TO THE PARADE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN...
WEL-L-L-L! HELLO!
OH, TELL ME QUICKLY, PLEASE! HAS ANYONE ENTERED IN THE PARADE AS... LOKI?
HMMM... ANYTHING FOR YOU, MISS! LET'S SEE NOW... AH! "L"... HERE IT IS! LEDA... LUCIFER... LOHENGRIN... MMM! NOPE! NO LOKI! ER... WON'T I DO?
VENUS! WHAT'S THE IDEA? YOU'VE RUINED OUR ENTRY!
!
IT IS LOKI! MY FOREBODING OF EVIL WAS CORRECT! THE PRINCE OF HADES HAS INVADED THE EARTH!
VENUS! DON'T JUST STAND THERE! EXPLAIN YOURSELF!
FORGET IT, CHIEF! THIS IS ONE FLOP SHE CAN'T TALK HER WAY OUT OF!
NOW VENUS KNOWS THE DANGER! BUT WHAT CAN SHE DO ABOUT IT? HOW CAN SHE BATTLE THE VILLAIN OF THE GODS... LOKI?

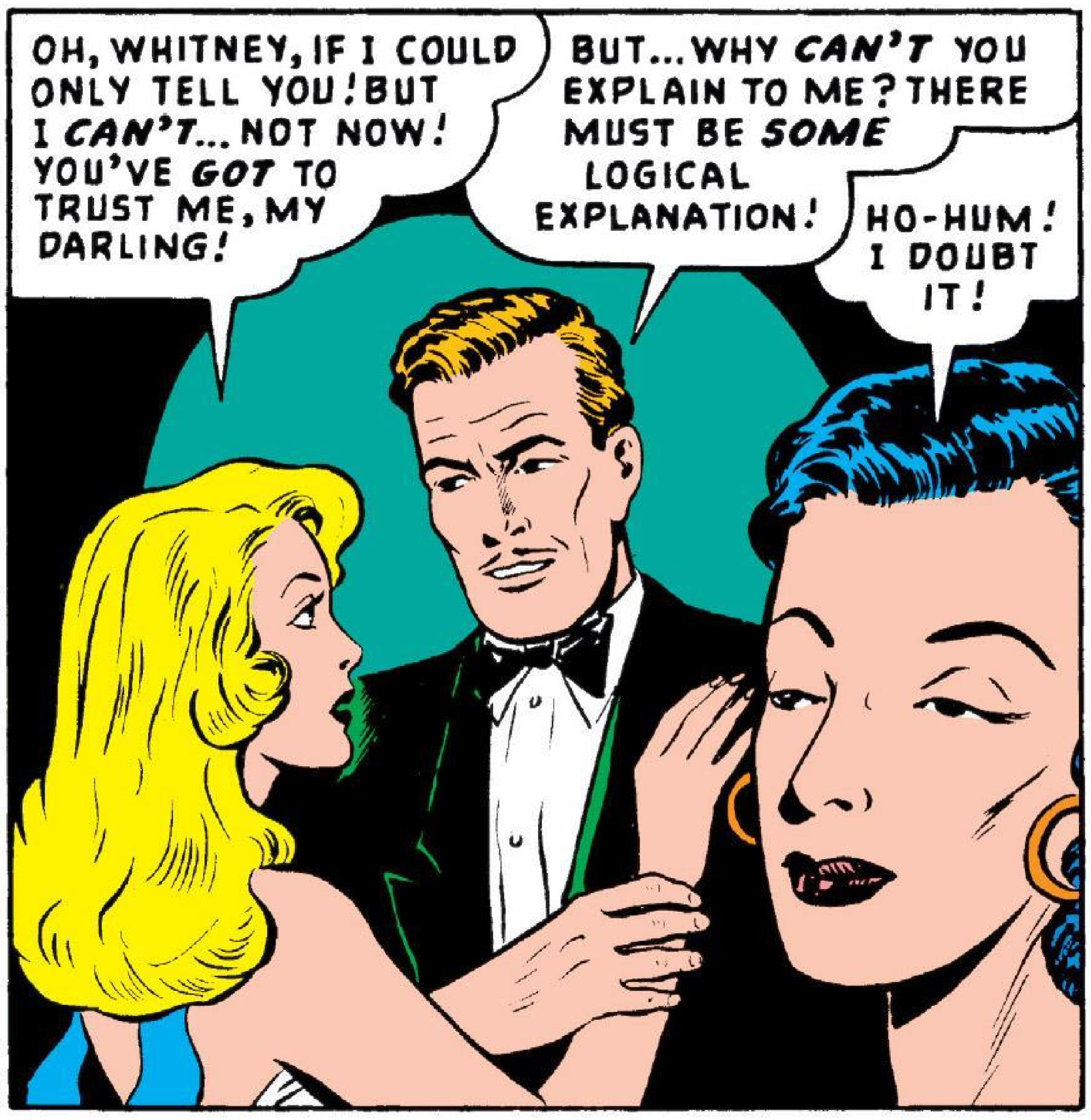
VENUS

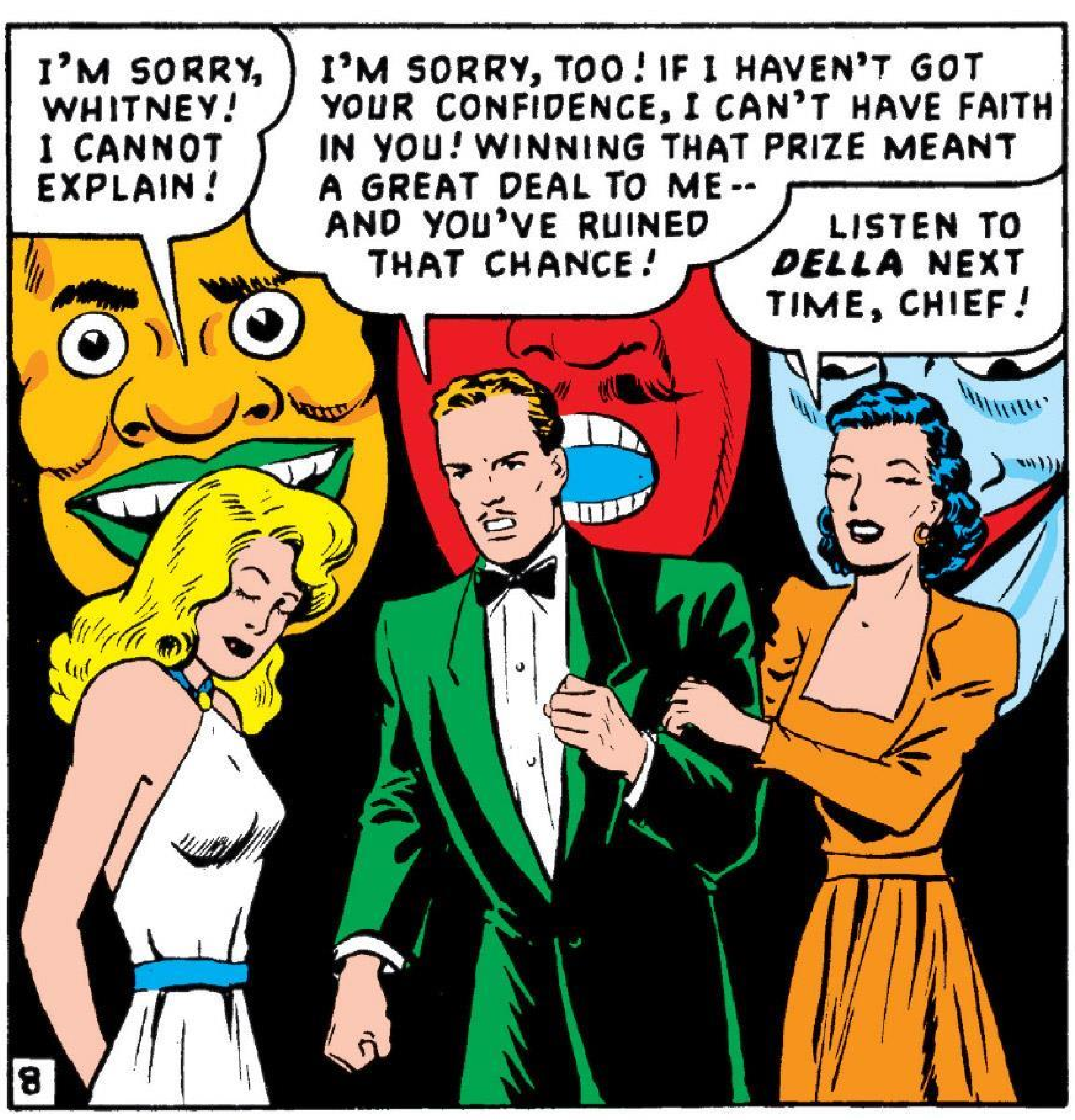
"FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE KING OF EVIL!"

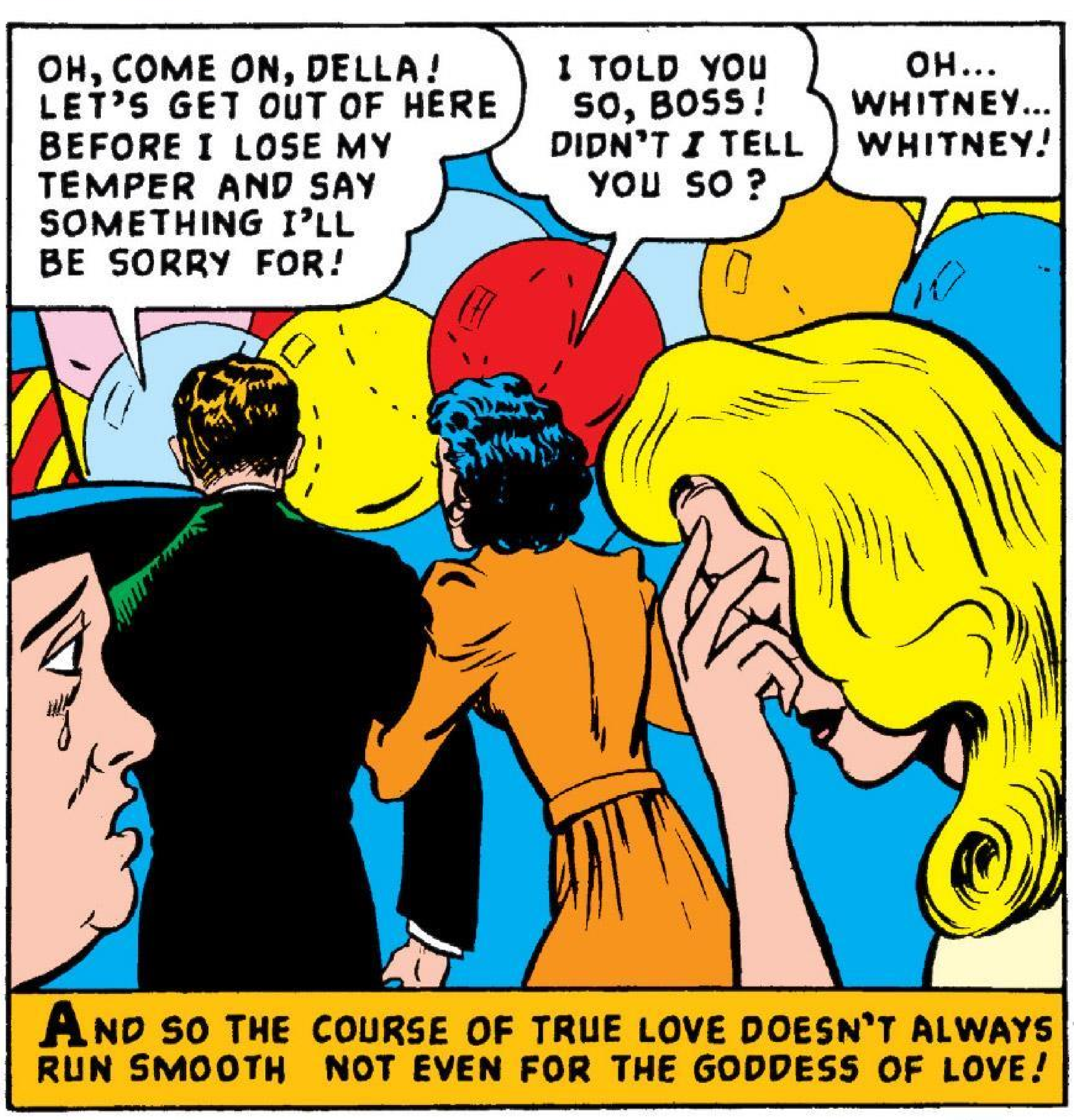
CHAPTER TWO

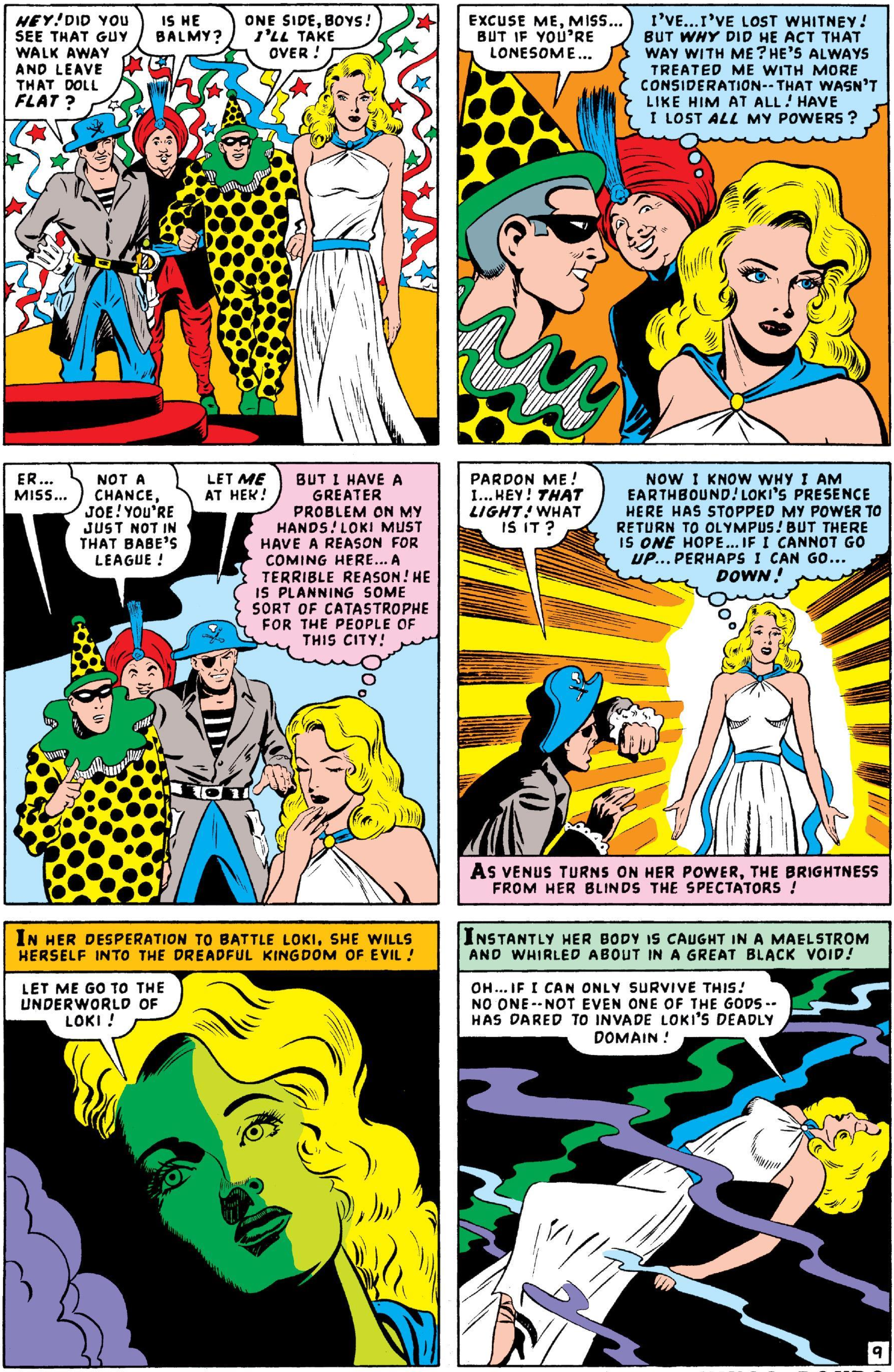

IN HER DESPERATION TO BATTLE LOKI, SHE WILLS HERSELF INTO THE DREADFUL KINGDOM OF EVIL!
LET ME GO TO THE UNDERWORLD OF LOKI!

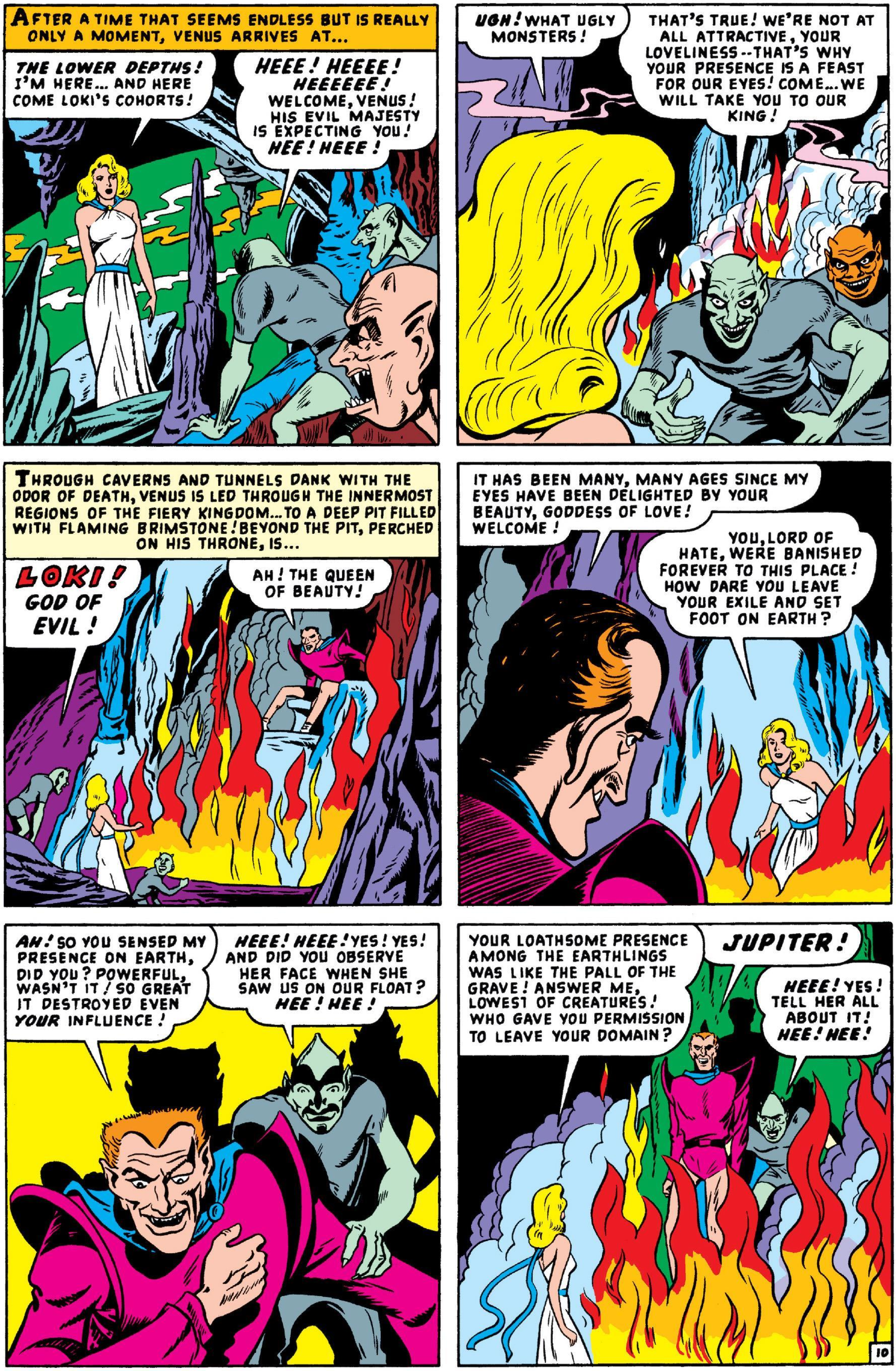

THE SHOCK OF LEARNING THAT LOKI, KING OF THE UNDERWORLD, HAS INVADED THE EARTH IS ALMOST TOO MUCH FOR VENUS! WHILE THE DUMFOUNDED WHITNEY THROWS QUESTIONS AT HER, SHE TRIES TO FORM A PLAN OF ACTION!
WHAT CAN I DO? HOW CAN I FIGHT LOKI'S EVIL GENIUS?
VENUS, WILL YOU *PLEASE* ANSWER ME? *WHY DID YOU LEAVE THE FLOAT*?

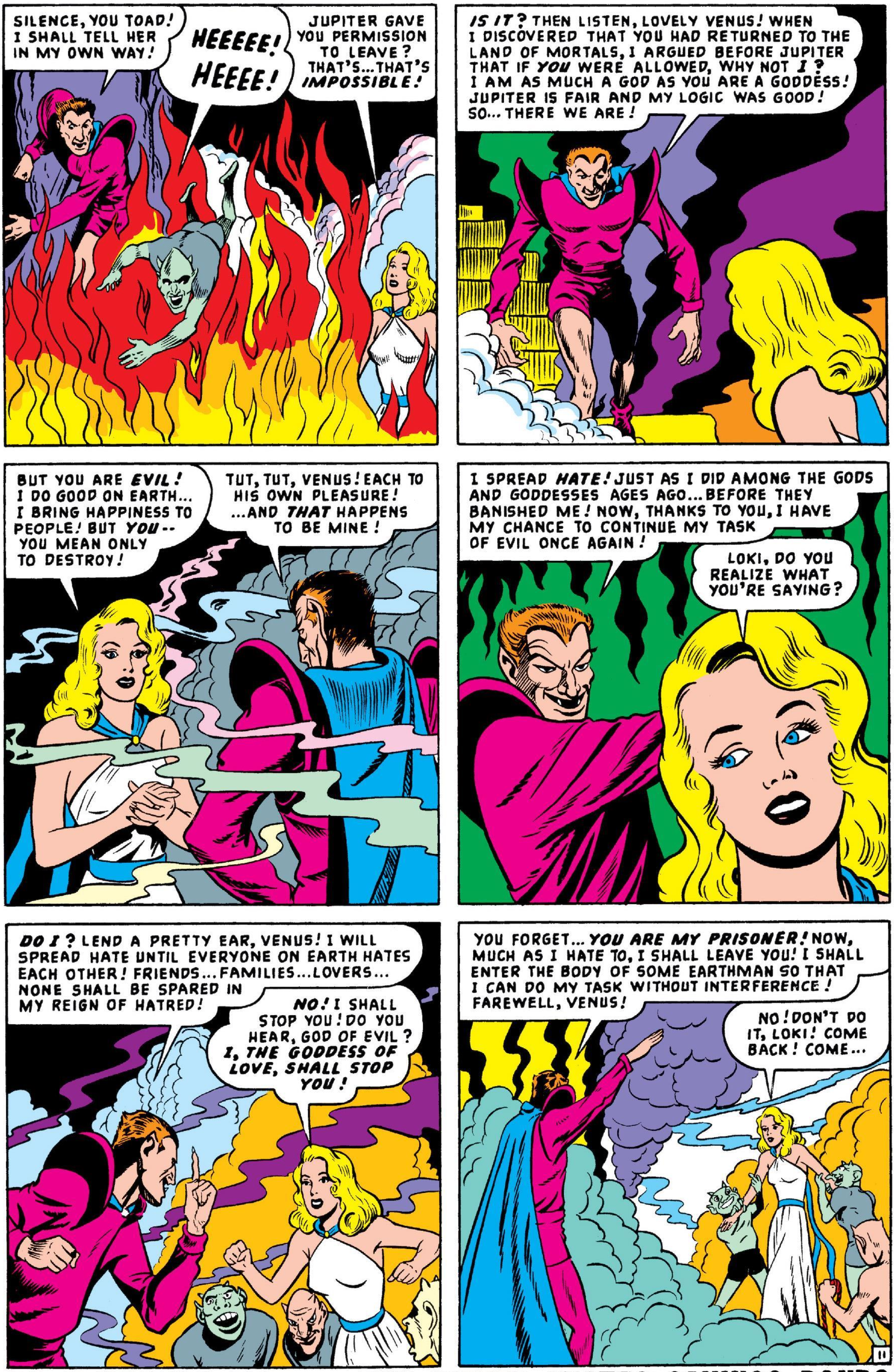

OH, WHITNEY, IF I COULD ONLY TELL YOU! BUT I *CAN'T*... NOT NOW! YOU'VE *GOT* TO TRUST ME, MY DARLING!
BUT... WHY *CAN'T* YOU EXPLAIN TO ME? THERE MUST BE *SOME* LOGICAL EXPLANATION!
HO-HUM! I DOUBT IT!

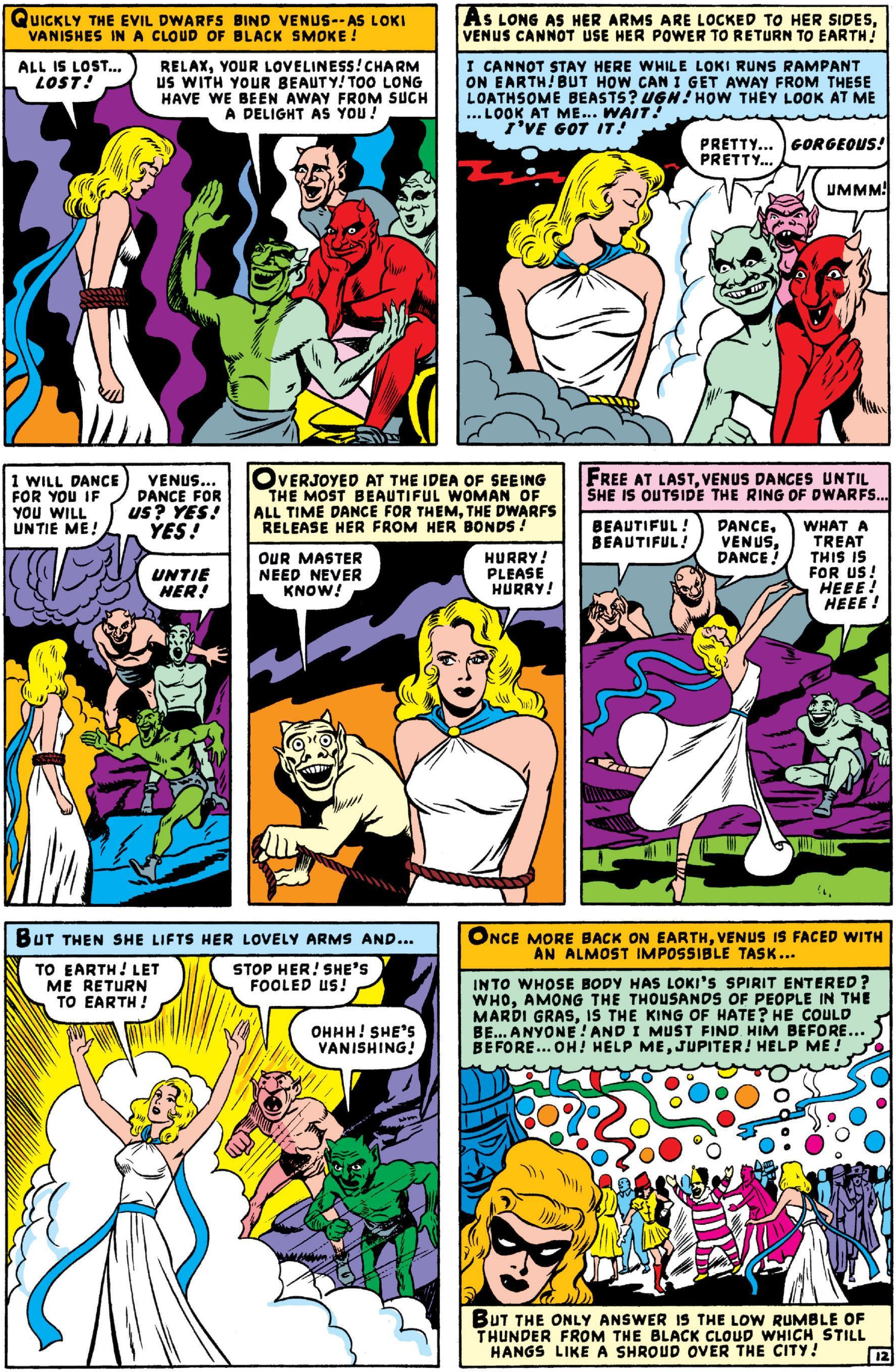

I'M SORRY, WHITNEY! I CANNOT EXPLAIN!
I'M SORRY, TOO! IF I HAVEN'T GOT YOUR CONFIDENCE, I CAN'T HAVE FAITH IN YOU! WINNING THAT PRIZE MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO ME -- AND YOU'VE RUINED THAT CHANCE!
LISTEN TO *DELLA* NEXT TIME, CHIEF!


OH, COME ON, DELLA! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE I LOSE MY TEMPER AND SAY SOMETHING I'LL BE SORRY FOR!
I TOLD YOU SO, BOSS! DIDN'T *I* TELL YOU SO?
OH... WHITNEY... WHITNEY!
AND SO THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE DOESN'T ALWAYS RUN SMOOTH NOT EVEN FOR THE GODDESS OF LOVE!


HEY! DID YOU SEE THAT GUY WALK AWAY AND LEAVE THAT DOLL FLAT?
IS HE BALMY?
ONE SIDE, BOYS! I'LL TAKE OVER!
EXCUSE ME, MISS... BUT IF YOU'RE LONESOME...
I'VE...I'VE LOST WHITNEY! BUT WHY DID HE ACT THAT WAY WITH ME? HE'S ALWAYS TREATED ME WITH MORE CONSIDERATION--THAT WASN'T LIKE HIM AT ALL! HAVE I LOST ALL MY POWERS?
ER... MISS...
NOT A CHANCE, JOE! YOU'RE JUST NOT IN THAT BABE'S LEAGUE!
LET ME AT HER!
BUT I HAVE A GREATER PROBLEM ON MY HANDS! LOKI MUST HAVE A REASON FOR COMING HERE... A TERRIBLE REASON! HE IS PLANNING SOME SORT OF CATASTROPHE FOR THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY!
PARDON ME! I...HEY! THAT LIGHT! WHAT IS IT?
NOW I KNOW WHY I AM EARTHBOUND! LOKI'S PRESENCE HERE HAS STOPPED MY POWER TO RETURN TO OLYMPUS! BUT THERE IS ONE HOPE... IF I CANNOT GO UP... PERHAPS I CAN GO... DOWN!
AS VENUS TURNS ON HER POWER, THE BRIGHTNESS FROM HER BLINDS THE SPECTATORS!
IN HER DESPERATION TO BATTLE LOKI, SHE WILLS HERSELF INTO THE DREADFUL KINGDOM OF EVIL!
LET ME GO TO THE UNDERWORLD OF LOKI!
INSTANTLY HER BODY IS CAUGHT IN A MAELSTROM AND WHIRLED ABOUT IN A GREAT BLACK VOID!
OH... IF I CAN ONLY SURVIVE THIS! NO ONE--NOT EVEN ONE OF THE GODS--HAS DARED TO INVADE LOKI'S DEADLY DOMAIN!


AFTER A TIME THAT SEEMS ENDLESS BUT IS REALLY ONLY A MOMENT, VENUS ARRIVES AT...
THE LOWER DEPTHS! I'M HERE... AND HERE COME LOKI'S COHORTS!
HEEE! HEEEE! HEEEEEE! WELCOME, VENUS! HIS EVIL MAJESTY IS EXPECTING YOU! HEE! HEEE!
UGH! WHAT UGLY MONSTERS!
THAT'S TRUE! WE'RE NOT AT ALL ATTRACTIVE, YOUR LOVELINESS--THAT'S WHY YOUR PRESENCE IS A FEAST FOR OUR EYES! COME... WE WILL TAKE YOU TO OUR KING!
THROUGH CAVERNS AND TUNNELS DANK WITH THE ODOR OF DEATH, VENUS IS LED THROUGH THE INNERMOST REGIONS OF THE FIERY KINGDOM... TO A DEEP PIT FILLED WITH FLAMING BRIMSTONE! BEYOND THE PIT, PERCHED ON HIS THRONE, IS...
LOKI! GOD OF EVIL!
AH! THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY!
IT HAS BEEN MANY, MANY AGES SINCE MY EYES HAVE BEEN DELIGHTED BY YOUR BEAUTY, GODDESS OF LOVE! WELCOME!
YOU, LORD OF HATE, WERE BANISHED FOREVER TO THIS PLACE! HOW DARE YOU LEAVE YOUR EXILE AND SET FOOT ON EARTH?
AH! SO YOU SENSED MY PRESENCE ON EARTH, DID YOU? POWERFUL, WASN'T IT! SO GREAT IT DESTROYED EVEN YOUR INFLUENCE!
HEEE! HEEE! YES! YES! AND DID YOU OBSERVE HER FACE WHEN SHE SAW US ON OUR FLOAT? HEE! HEE!
YOUR LOATHSOME PRESENCE AMONG THE EARTHLINGS WAS LIKE THE PALL OF THE GRAVE! ANSWER ME, LOWEST OF CREATURES! WHO GAVE YOU PERMISSION TO LEAVE YOUR DOMAIN?
JUPITER!
HEEE! YES! TELL HER ALL ABOUT IT! HEE! HEE!


SILENCE, YOU TOAD! I SHALL TELL HER IN MY OWN WAY!
HEEEEE! HEEEE!
JUPITER GAVE YOU PERMISSION TO LEAVE? THAT'S...THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!*
IS IT? THEN LISTEN, LOVELY VENUS! WHEN I DISCOVERED THAT YOU HAD RETURNED TO THE LAND OF MORTALS, I ARGUED BEFORE JUPITER THAT IF *YOU* WERE ALLOWED, WHY NOT *I*? I AM AS MUCH A GOD AS YOU ARE A GODDESS! JUPITER IS FAIR AND MY LOGIC WAS GOOD! SO... THERE WE ARE!
BUT YOU ARE *EVIL!* I DO GOOD ON EARTH... I BRING HAPPINESS TO PEOPLE! BUT *YOU*-- YOU MEAN ONLY TO DESTROY!
TUT, TUT, VENUS! EACH TO HIS OWN PLEASURE! ...AND *THAT* HAPPENS TO BE MINE!
I SPREAD *HATE!* JUST AS I DID AMONG THE GODS AND GODDESSES AGES AGO...BEFORE THEY BANISHED ME! NOW, THANKS TO YOU, I HAVE MY CHANCE TO CONTINUE MY TASK OF EVIL ONCE AGAIN!
LOKI, DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
DO I? LEND A PRETTY EAR, VENUS! I WILL SPREAD HATE UNTIL EVERYONE ON EARTH HATES EACH OTHER! FRIENDS...FAMILIES...LOVERS... NONE SHALL BE SPARED IN MY REIGN OF HATRED!
NO! I SHALL STOP YOU! DO YOU HEAR, GOD OF EVIL? *I, THE GODDESS OF LOVE, SHALL STOP YOU!*
YOU FORGET... *YOU ARE MY PRISONER!* NOW, MUCH AS I HATE TO, I SHALL LEAVE YOU! I SHALL ENTER THE BODY OF SOME EARTHMAN SO THAT I CAN DO MY TASK WITHOUT INTERFERENCE! FAREWELL, VENUS!
NO! DON'T DO IT, LOKI! COME BACK! COME...


QUICKLY THE EVIL DWARFS BIND VENUS--AS LOKI VANISHES IN A CLOUD OF BLACK SMOKE!
ALL IS LOST... *LOST!*
RELAX, YOUR LOVELINESS! CHARM US WITH YOUR BEAUTY! TOO LONG HAVE WE BEEN AWAY FROM SUCH A DELIGHT AS YOU!
AS LONG AS HER ARMS ARE LOCKED TO HER SIDES, VENUS CANNOT USE HER POWER TO RETURN TO EARTH!
I CANNOT STAY HERE WHILE LOKI RUNS RAMPANT ON EARTH! BUT HOW CAN I GET AWAY FROM THESE LOATHSOME BEASTS? *UGH!* HOW THEY LOOK AT ME ...LOOK AT ME... *WAIT! I'VE GOT IT!*
PRETTY... PRETTY...
GORGEOUS!
UMMM!
I WILL DANCE FOR YOU IF YOU WILL UNTIE ME!
VENUS... DANCE FOR *US? YES! YES!*
UNTIE HER!
OVERJOYED AT THE IDEA OF SEEING THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN OF ALL TIME DANCE FOR THEM, THE DWARFS RELEASE HER FROM HER BONDS!
OUR MASTER NEED NEVER KNOW!
HURRY! PLEASE HURRY!
FREE AT LAST, VENUS DANCES UNTIL SHE IS OUTSIDE THE RING OF DWARFS...
BEAUTIFUL! BEAUTIFUL!
DANCE, VENUS, DANCE!
WHAT A TREAT THIS IS FOR US! *HEEE! HEEE!*
BUT THEN SHE LIFTS HER LOVELY ARMS AND...
TO EARTH! LET ME RETURN TO EARTH!
STOP HER! SHE'S FOOLED US!
OHHH! SHE'S VANISHING!
ONCE MORE BACK ON EARTH, VENUS IS FACED WITH AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TASK...
INTO WHOSE BODY HAS LOKI'S SPIRIT ENTERED? WHO, AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE IN THE MARDI GRAS, IS THE KING OF HATE? HE COULD BE...ANYONE! AND I MUST FIND HIM BEFORE... BEFORE...OH! HELP ME, JUPITER! HELP ME!
BUT THE ONLY ANSWER IS THE LOW RUMBLE OF THUNDER FROM THE BLACK CLOUD WHICH STILL HANGS LIKE A SHROUD OVER THE CITY!

THE HOUSE LOVE BUILT

TODAY I was the happiest girl in the office as I sang at my typewriter.

Elsie sidled up to me. "Why so happy?" she questioned.

"Oh, didn't you know? Today's my wedding day," I answered and couldn't keep the music out of my voice.

"Your wedding day?" she asked. "Then what are you doing here?" There was venom in her voice. Elsie has always been jealous of me. I know she likes Paul.

I looked up at her innocently. "Paul and I finally found an apartment. We just can't wait any longer. We're going to be married at noon today at the City Hall, and we're going on our honeymoon this summer."

A strange twisted smile came to her face. "So today the wedding bells ring for you and Paul? Best wishes, Irene." She patted her short bob. "When will Paul get back to town?" she asked.

"Get back? I don't know what you mean."

"You don't? Paul left town early this morning."

I drew in my breath and grabbed her arm. For a moment I couldn't breathe and panic stopped my heartbeats. "You're lying!" I shouted. "You're jealous! You'd like to marry Paul yourself."

"Calm down. Who'd want to marry Paul, or any man who skips out on his wedding day?" She laughed and I slumped back in the chair.

Her voice sounded far away. All I could hear were a few words above the ringing in my ears, ". . . saw him at the station . . . met my aunt . . . he seemed to be in an awful hurry . . ."

Then she left and the beautiful song ended. Where had Paul gone early this morning? Why hadn't he told me? Was he really running away?

I sat up and blinked my dry eyes. But how silly, I told myself. Elsie is lying. Paul wouldn't have to run away from me. If he didn't want to marry me he could tell me.

With shaking hands, I reached for the phone. I'd call his office to make sure. "Hello?" my quavering voice asked. "May I please speak to Mr. Paul Brand? He's not there? When will he return? He doesn't work there any more?"

I hung up and felt the tears on my cheeks. I put my head on the desk and cried bitterly. Elsie was right. Paul had run out on his wedding day. He didn't have the courage to tell me. He'd probably stay away for a few days, then return and get a new job at the other end of town so that he wouldn't have to face me.

"Something wrong, Irene?" Mrs. Burke, my employer, asked.

I sat up and dried my eyes. "N-no, I'm sorry."

I tried to type, but the words swam before my eyes. It seemed an eternity until it was time for lunch. Without turning to the right or left, I ran for my coat and hurried to the street. Elsie had probably told all the girls by now and they'd ask questions.

I tried to eat lunch, but the food tasted like cotton. At this very moment I should be hearing the words, ". . . for richer or for poorer . . . until death . . ."

I paid my check and stood on the street again. Then a thought came to me. What if Paul was at the City Hall waiting for me? What if it was all a ghastly mistake?

A cab rolled up and I raced to it. "City Hall, driver, and please hurry!"

"Deadline for dog licenses?" he quipped as he stepped on the gas.

"N-no, it's my wedding day," I answered hopefully.

"Well, well, congrats! I'll get you there pronto."

My knees seemed to be made of water as I walked toward the office. I looked around frantically only to discover that Paul wasn't there! A large clock ticked away the seconds above me. Twelve-thirty! And we were to meet at 12:05.

"Looking for someone?" the information girl asked as I approached her desk.

"Yes, I'm Irene Dennis. Was

someone asking for me? Was a Paul Brand here?"

"No, not that I know of, Miss. Just a moment and I'll ask inside." She returned in a few seconds shaking her head.

"Thank you," I said and ran down the steps. My sobs were almost choking me. Every novel I had ever read and every movie I had ever seen about girls being left at the altar came back to me. Things like that only happened in stories, I had thought, not to living people.

"But it's happening to me," I repeated to my racing footsteps all the way home. I couldn't return to work and I couldn't afford another cab. All I wanted was to be alone with my heartbreak in my own room.

I fell on the bed. Visions of our little apartment came to me—the place where Paul and I were to be so happy. We had spent days fixing it up. I remembered Paul's kisses . . . his promises . . . his dreams of success. "This is only temporary, Irene," he had said over and over. "It won't be long before we'll be moving into our dream house. I've got something cooking right now. I expect it to break soon. A good job. My wife is going to have the best!" Then he'd kiss me.

"Any place with you, Paul, will be my dream house," I'd answer. "All I want is you and your love. That's my world."

We planned to move to our apartment after work tonight. I would have to tell the landlady that I was staying . . . indefinitely.

The phone rang downstairs and I heard it in my dreams. It seemed like an ominous bell ringing my death knoll. I sat up. Maybe it was Paul calling long distance to explain everything.

Anxiously I raced down the stairs. "Hello?" I asked and waited.

It was Elsie. She sounded triumphant. "Mrs. Burke wants to know if you're ill and when you're coming back to work. I told her you'd had an emotional upset. I told her you'd be back on Monday . . . I'm going away for the weekend . . ." her voice went on and on.

Quietly I slipped the receiver on the hook. My aching brain imagined everything. Was it Elsie and Paul? Did Paul love Elsie and had she known all along that he wouldn't be at the City Hall? Was she meeting

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Paul for the weekend?

I tried to sleep and forget the awful tragedy that had happened to me, but I couldn't. I got up and sat at the window, staring out with unseeing eyes. The phone rang again and again. I sat immobile. Elsie's taunts were unbearable, and I couldn't speak to anyone else and answer their questions, or make excuses and try to be gay. All I wanted was a little time for the wound in my heart to heal . . . just a little time.

I don't know how long I sat at the window. My body felt numb and my eyes were glassy from staring into my past dreams. It was like being dead . . . no thoughts any more . . . no emotions . . . just paralysis.

I heard the doorbell ring then footsteps on the stairs. It all seemed very far away. Then knocks on my own door and conversation. All of it was unreal. "Got a pass key?" I heard a voice ask the landlady. "Yes, here it is," she answered, and then I heard nibblings at my lock, but I continued to sit rigidly at the window.

The door opened and I turned my head. Paul stood in the doorway. He was grinning. "Fine thing to happen to a man! Stranded at the altar. I mean the City Hall. Irene, Irene, my dear," he said and ran to me when he saw my face.

"You were there! I can see it all in your eyes. Forgive me, darling," he murmured and put his arms around me. "I got a transfer to South River. I wanted to surprise you. The train was late. I got to the City Hall at 12:45." I listened, but my brain was still numb.

His kiss on my lips awakened me from my nightmare. i clung to him. "Paul, Paul, it is you, isn't it?"

"Of course, darling. Will you ever forgive me for doing this to you? I love you. How can you think I'd hurt you? I called the office. They said you were ill. Oh, darling, we're moving to South River tomorrow—right after our marriage. I've got a big job just as I promised, and a house, darling, a *dream house.*"

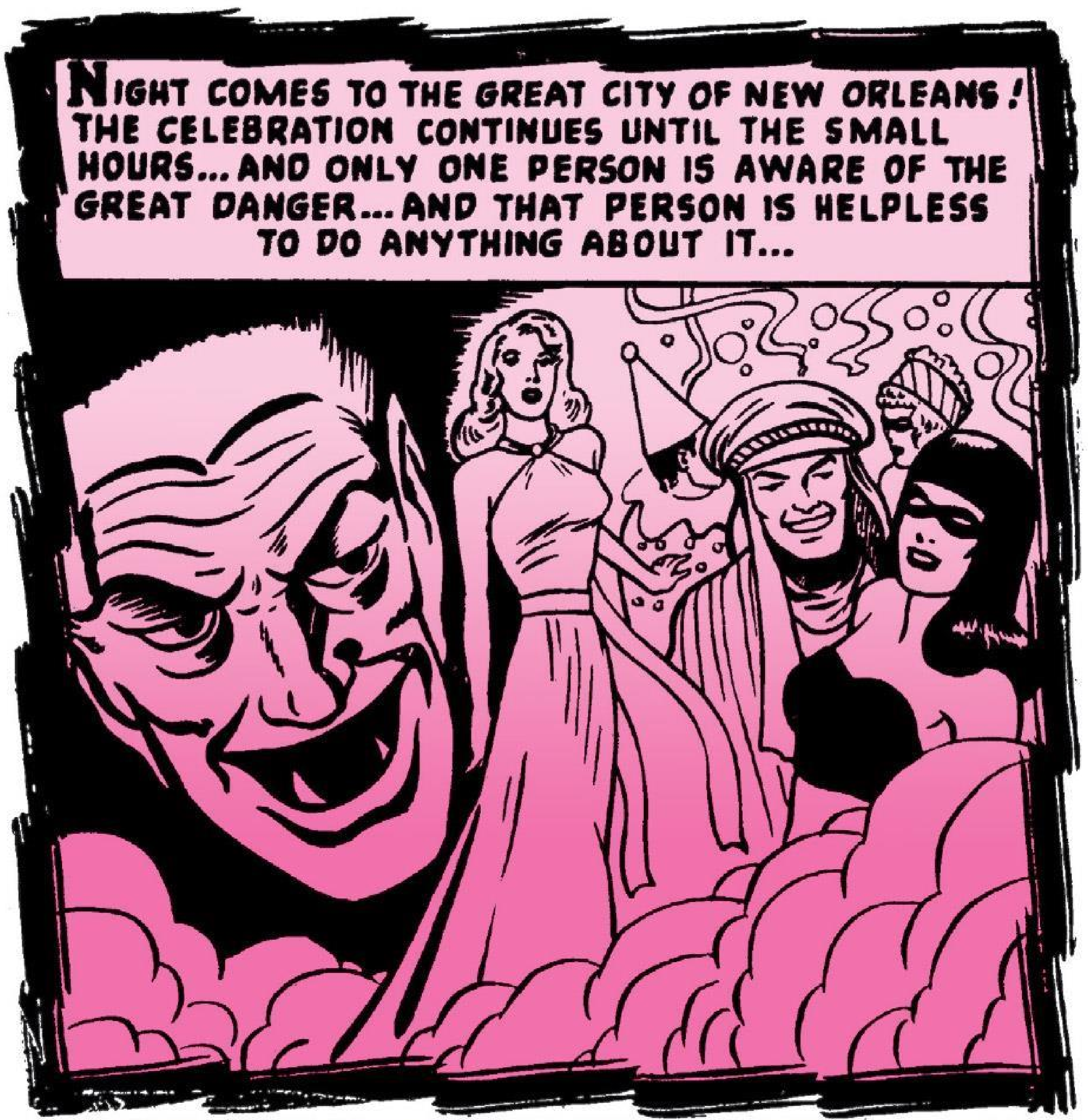
I clung to him and whispered, "With you any place will be a dream house, sweetheart. All I want is you!'

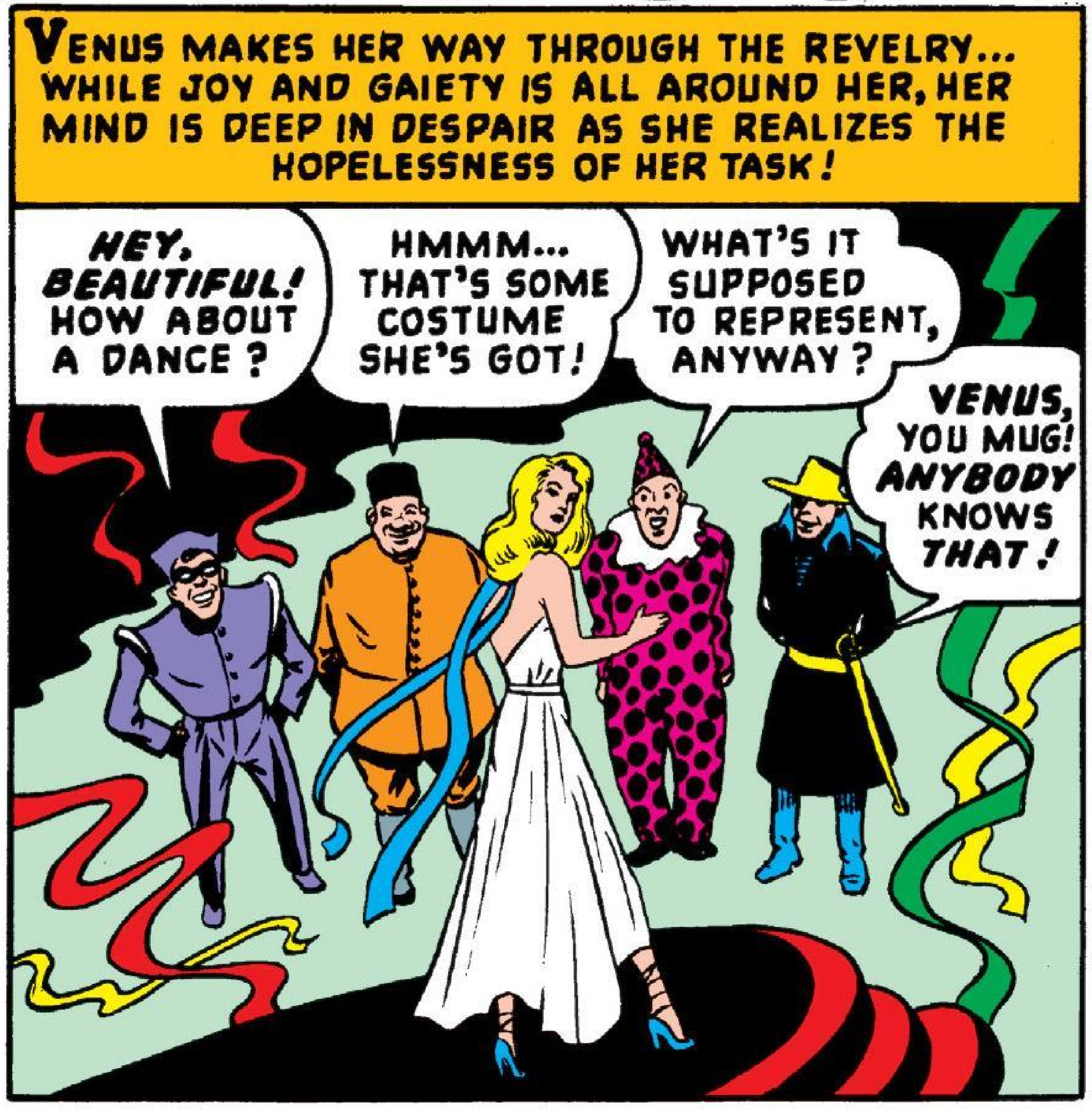
THE END 5173

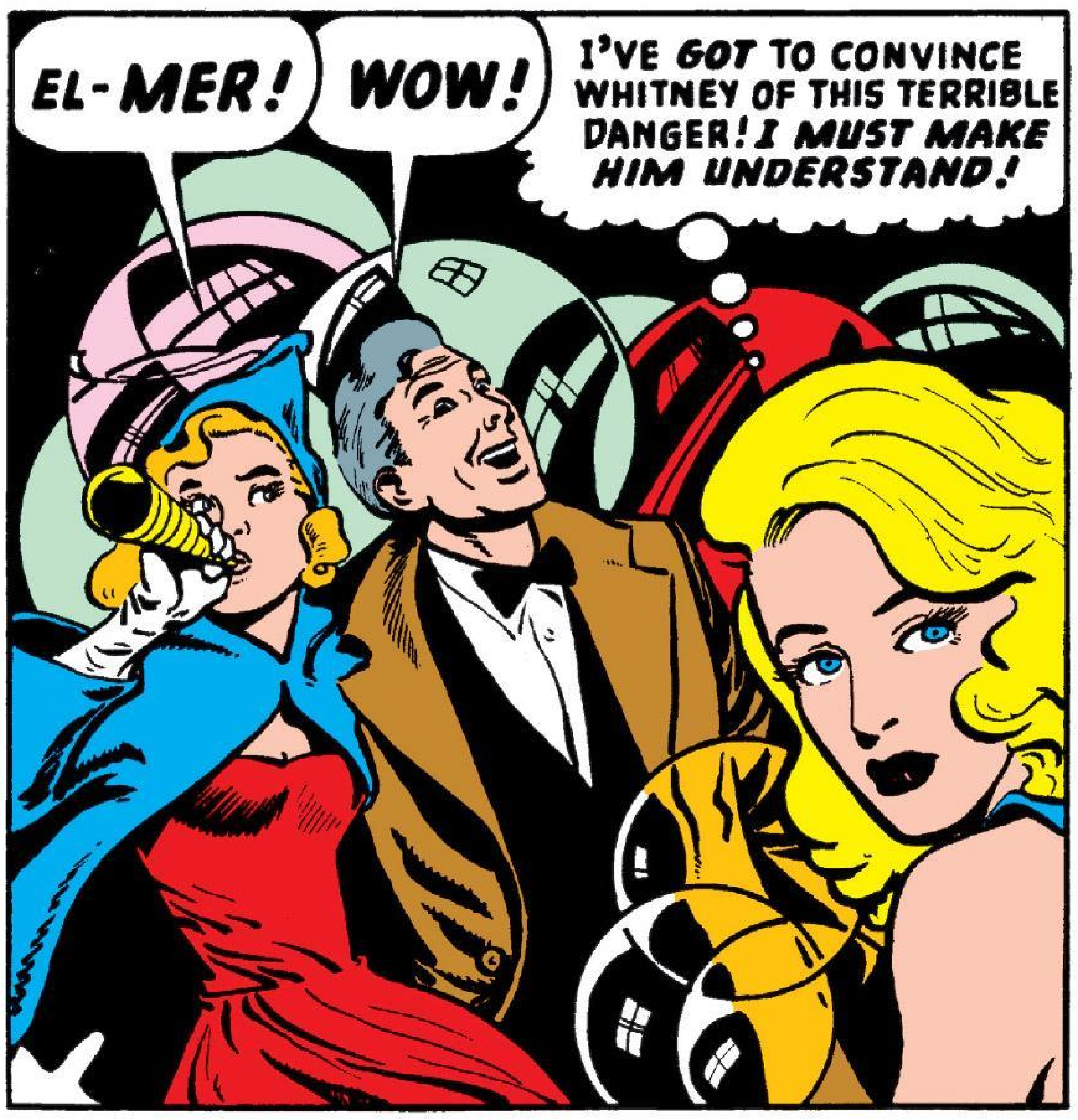
VENUS

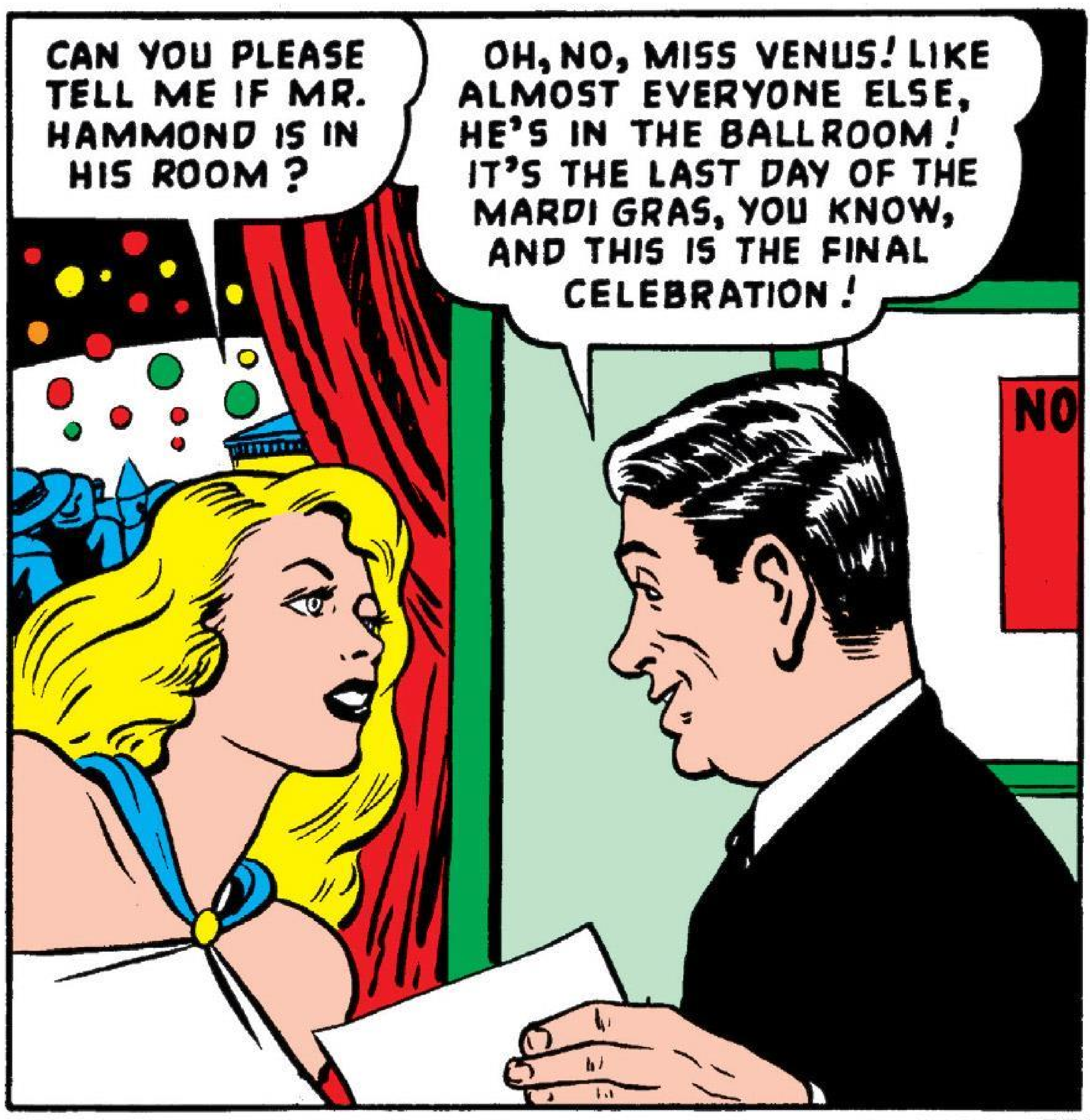
"THE WRATH OF A GODDESS!"

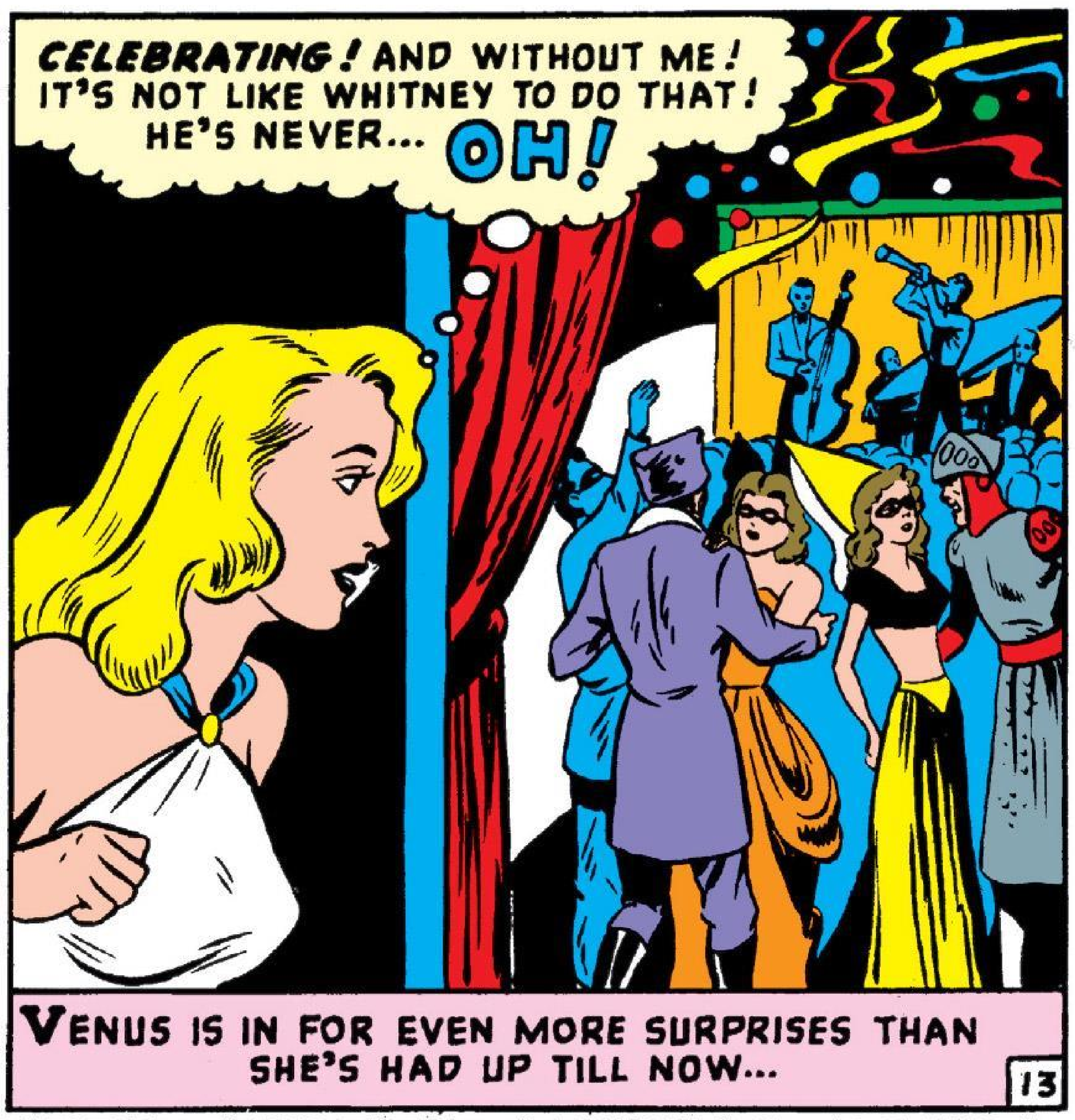
CHAPTER THREE

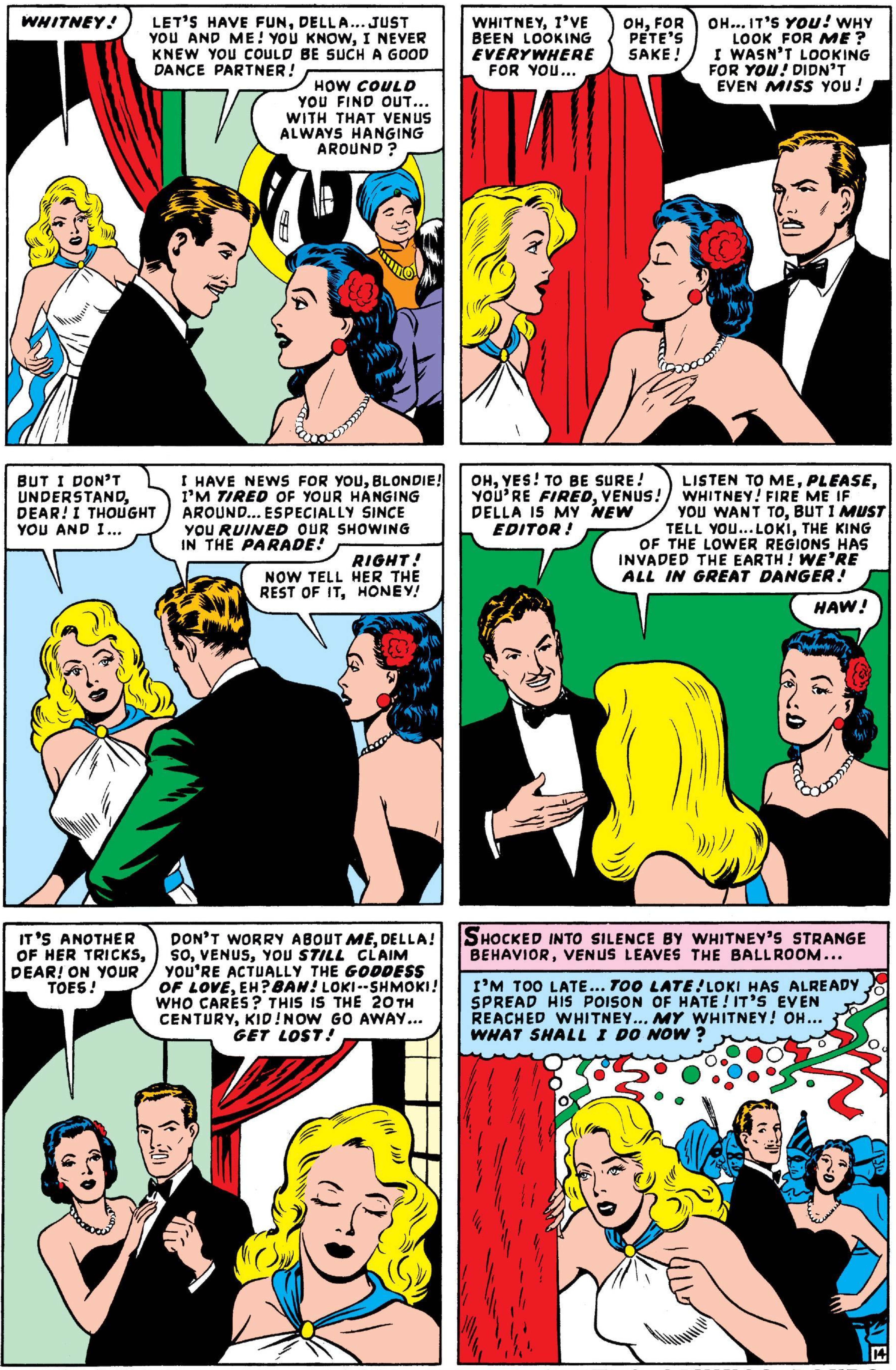

NIGHT COMES TO THE GREAT CITY OF NEW ORLEANS! THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES UNTIL THE SMALL HOURS... AND ONLY ONE PERSON IS AWARE OF THE GREAT DANGER... AND THAT PERSON IS HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT...


VENUS MAKES HER WAY THROUGH THE REVELRY... WHILE JOY AND GAIETY IS ALL AROUND HER, HER MIND IS DEEP IN DESPAIR AS SHE REALIZES THE HOPELESSNESS OF HER TASK!
HEY, BEAUTIFUL! HOW ABOUT A DANCE?
HMMM... THAT'S SOME COSTUME SHE'S GOT!
WHAT'S IT SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT, ANYWAY?
VENUS, YOU MUG! *ANYBODY* KNOWS *THAT*!

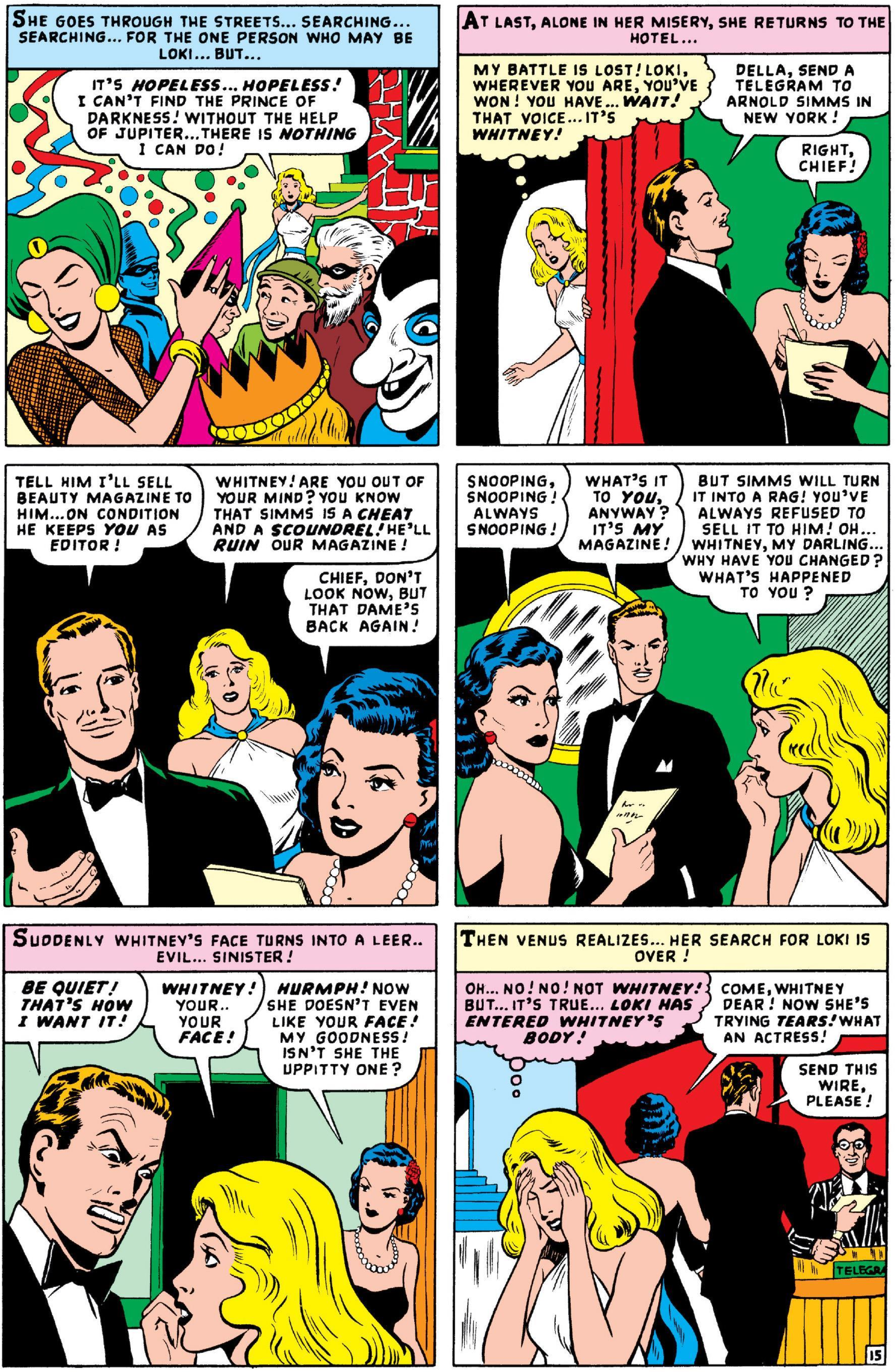

EL-*MER*!
WOW!
I'VE *GOT* TO CONVINCE WHITNEY OF THIS TERRIBLE DANGER! *I MUST MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND!*

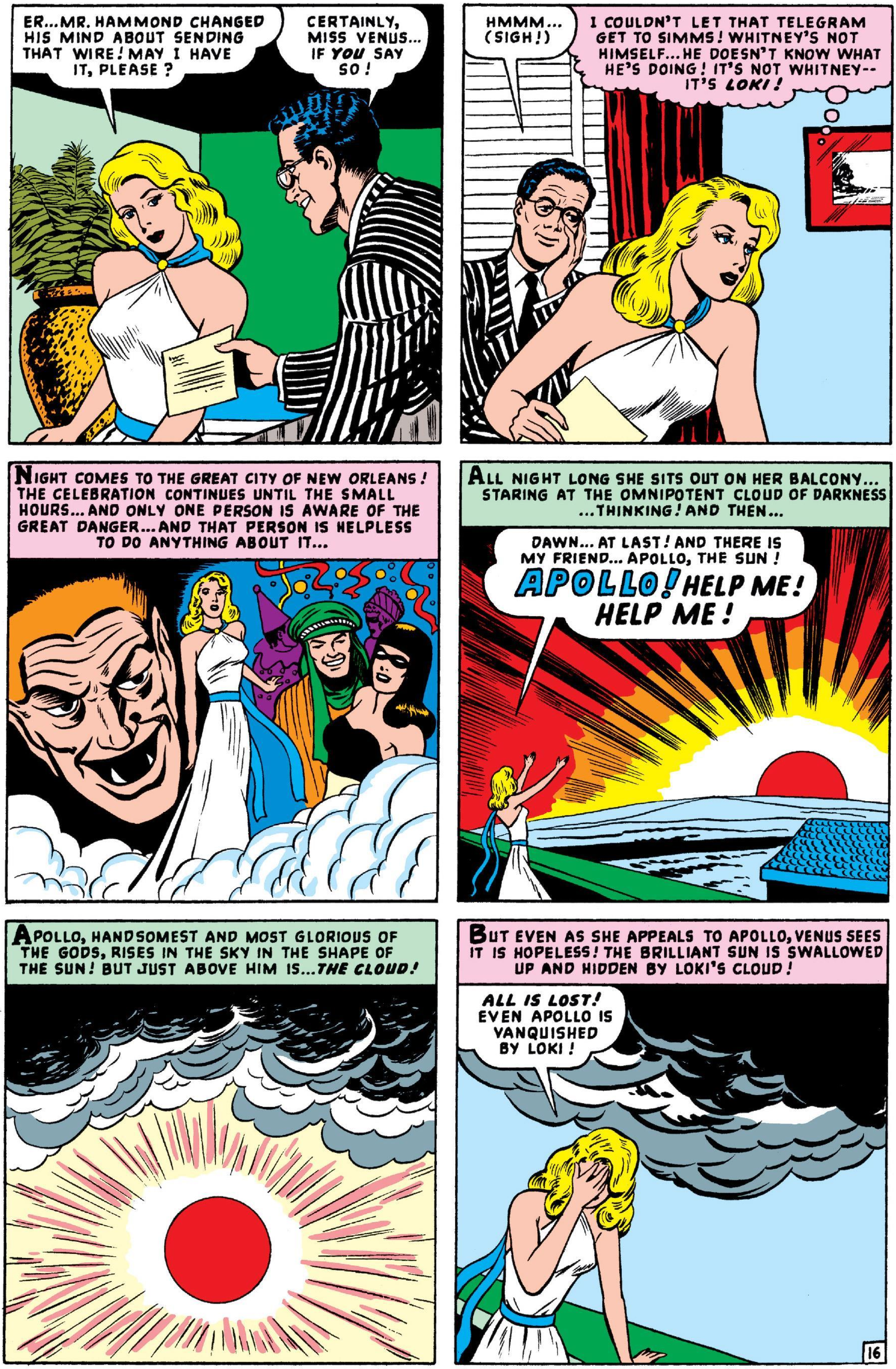

CAN YOU PLEASE TELL ME IF MR. HAMMOND IS IN HIS ROOM?
OH, NO, MISS VENUS! LIKE ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE, HE'S IN THE BALLROOM! IT'S THE LAST DAY OF THE MARDI GRAS, YOU KNOW, AND THIS IS THE FINAL CELEBRATION!
NO

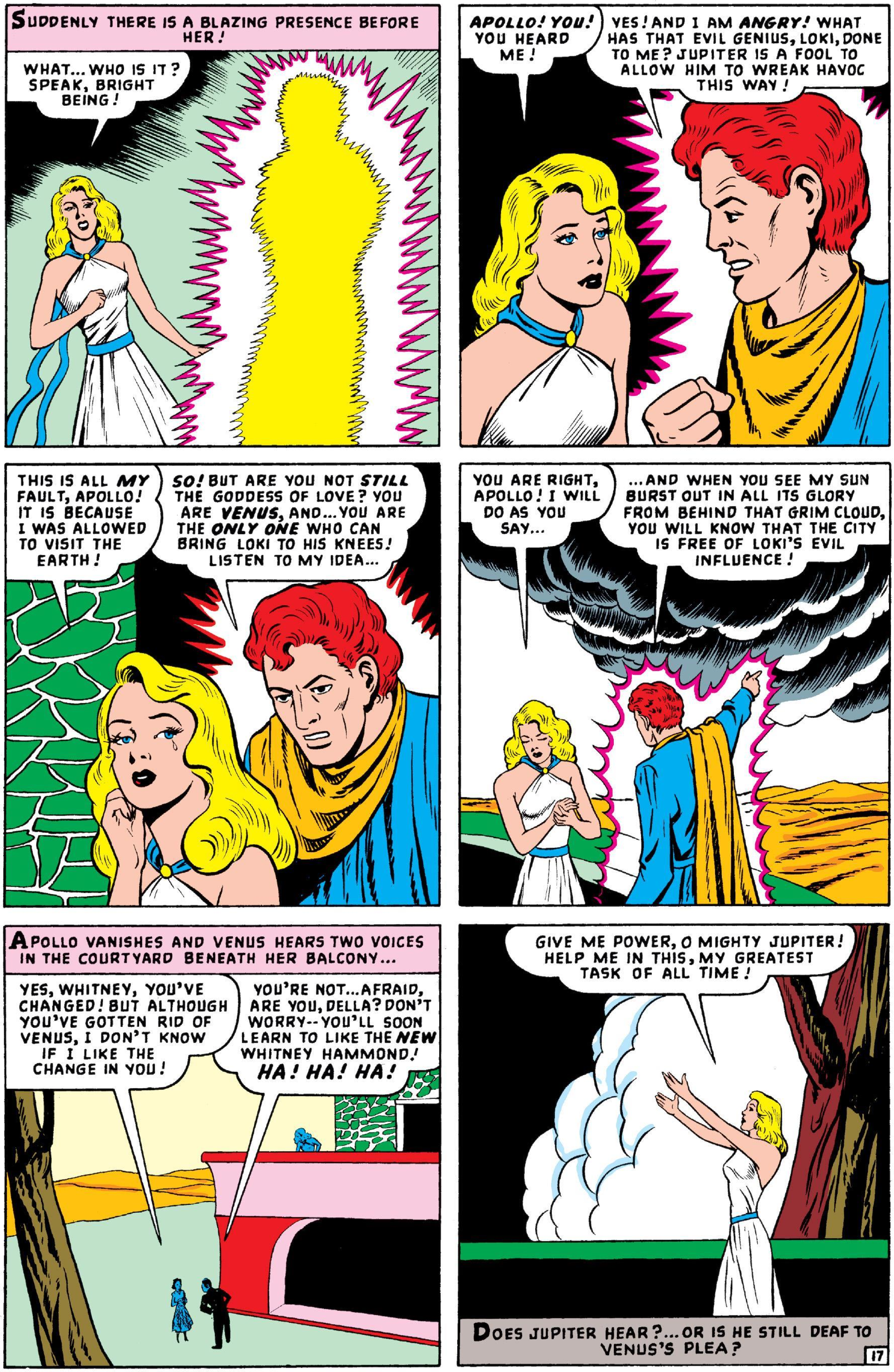

CELEBRATING! AND WITHOUT ME! IT'S NOT LIKE WHITNEY TO DO THAT! HE'S NEVER... OH!
VENUS IS IN FOR EVEN MORE SURPRISES THAN SHE'S HAD UP TILL NOW...

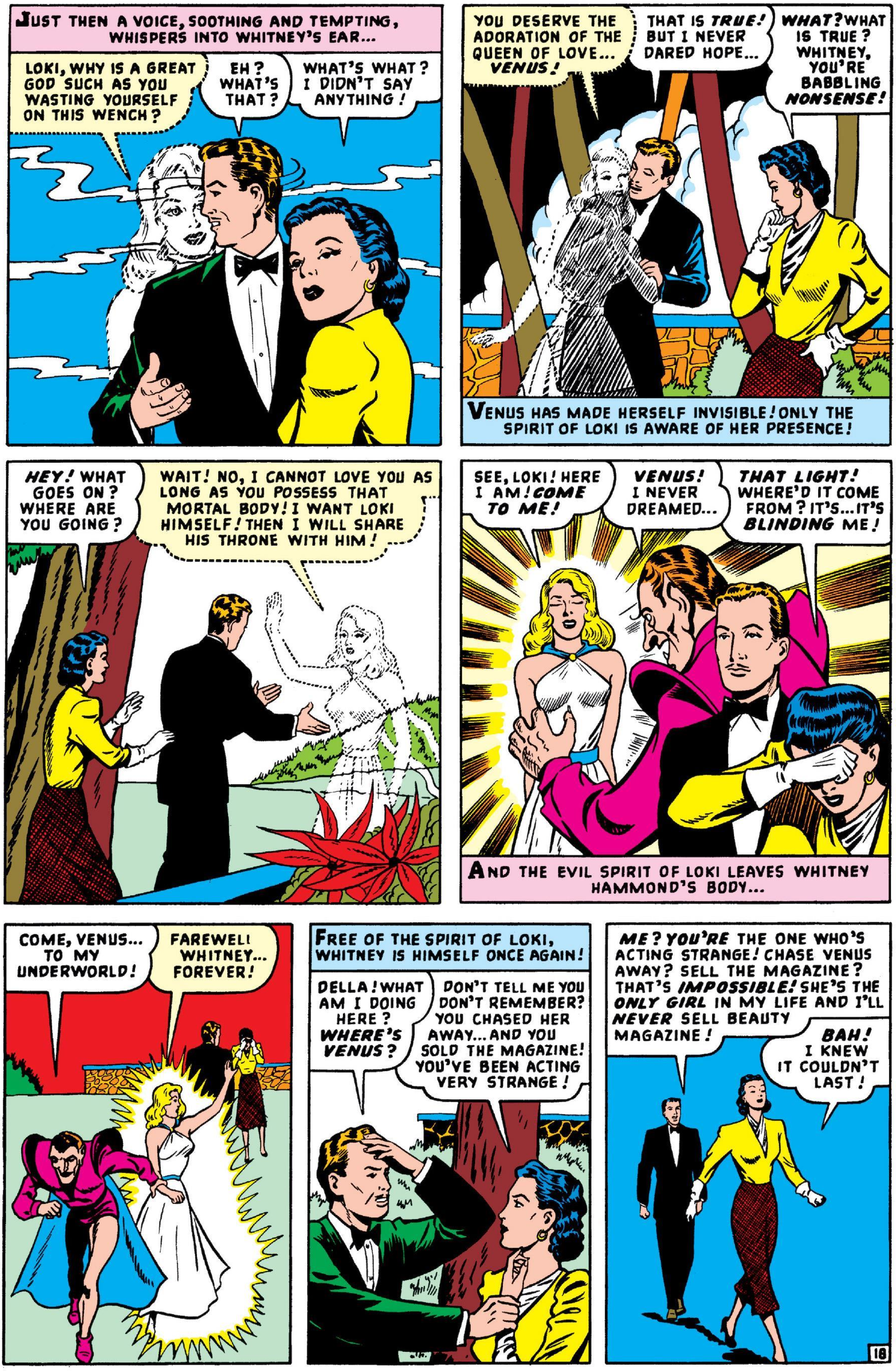

WHITNEY!
LET'S HAVE FUN, DELLA... JUST YOU AND ME! YOU KNOW, I NEVER KNEW YOU COULD BE SUCH A GOOD DANCE PARTNER!
HOW ***COULD*** YOU FIND OUT... WITH THAT VENUS ALWAYS HANGING AROUND?
WHITNEY, I'VE BEEN LOOKING ***EVERYWHERE*** FOR YOU...
OH, FOR PETE'S SAKE!
OH... IT'S ***YOU!*** WHY LOOK FOR ***ME?*** I WASN'T LOOKING FOR ***YOU!*** DIDN'T EVEN ***MISS*** YOU!
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, DEAR! I THOUGHT YOU AND I...
I HAVE NEWS FOR YOU, BLONDIE! I'M ***TIRED*** OF YOUR HANGING AROUND... ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU ***RUINED*** OUR SHOWING IN THE ***PARADE!***
RIGHT! NOW TELL HER THE REST OF IT, HONEY!
OH, YES! TO BE SURE! YOU'RE ***FIRED***, VENUS! DELLA IS MY ***NEW EDITOR!***
LISTEN TO ME, ***PLEASE***, WHITNEY! FIRE ME IF YOU WANT TO, BUT I ***MUST*** TELL YOU... LOKI, THE KING OF THE LOWER REGIONS HAS INVADED THE EARTH! ***WE'RE ALL IN GREAT DANGER!***
HAW!
IT'S ANOTHER OF HER TRICKS, DEAR! ON YOUR TOES!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ***ME***, DELLA! SO, VENUS, YOU ***STILL*** CLAIM YOU'RE ACTUALLY THE ***GODDESS OF LOVE***, EH? ***BAH!*** LOKI--SHMOKI! WHO CARES? THIS IS THE 20TH CENTURY, KID! NOW GO AWAY... ***GET LOST!***
SHOCKED INTO SILENCE BY WHITNEY'S STRANGE BEHAVIOR, VENUS LEAVES THE BALLROOM...
I'M TOO LATE... ***TOO LATE!*** LOKI HAS ALREADY SPREAD HIS POISON OF HATE! IT'S EVEN REACHED WHITNEY... ***MY*** WHITNEY! OH... ***WHAT SHALL I DO NOW?***

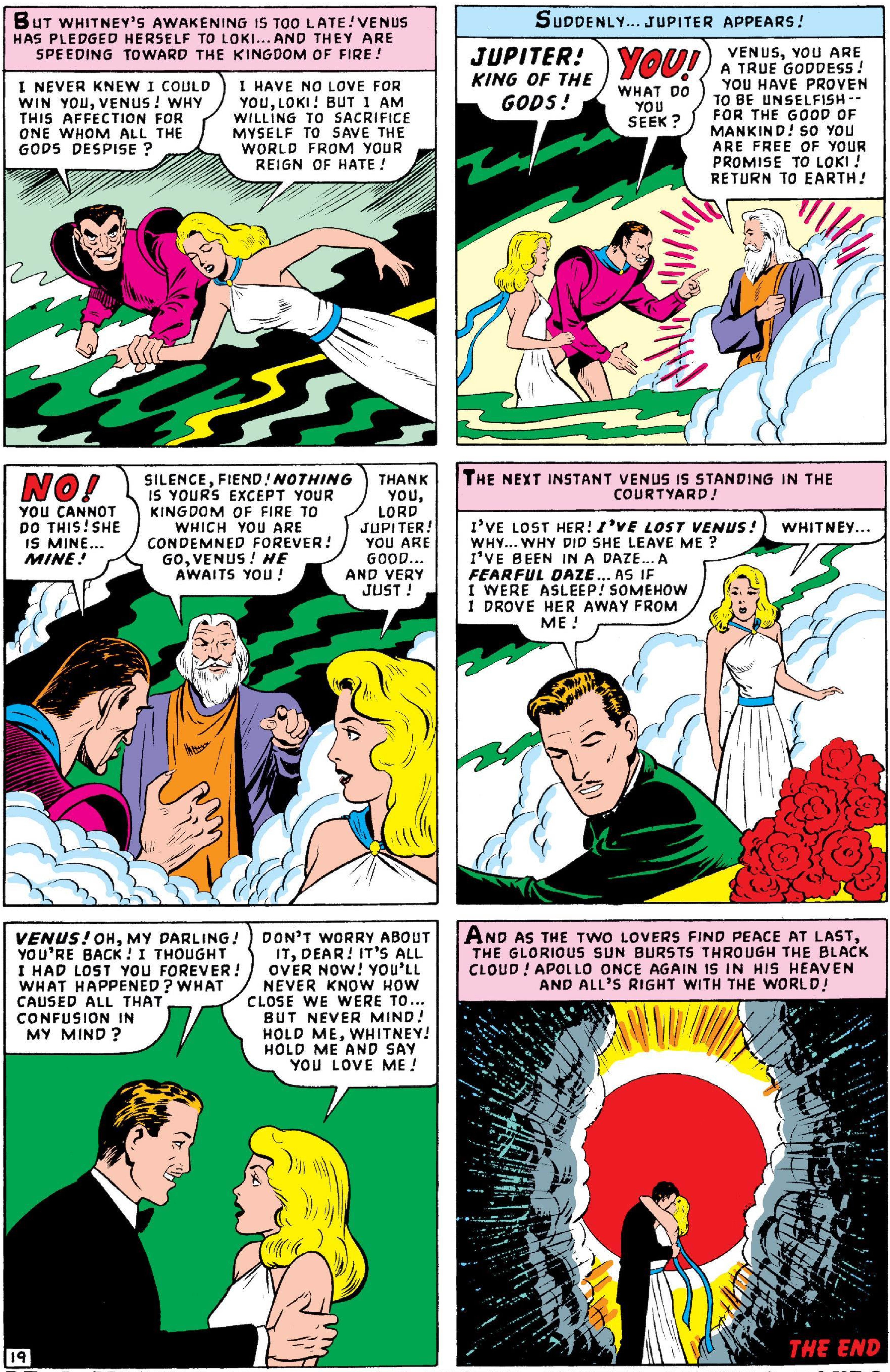
BE A MODERN '49er — BUY UNITED STATES SAVINGS BONDS


SHE GOES THROUGH THE STREETS... SEARCHING... SEARCHING... FOR THE ONE PERSON WHO MAY BE LOKI... BUT...
IT'S *HOPELESS... HOPELESS!* I CAN'T FIND THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS! WITHOUT THE HELP OF JUPITER... THERE IS *NOTHING* I CAN DO!
AT LAST, ALONE IN HER MISERY, SHE RETURNS TO THE HOTEL...
MY BATTLE IS LOST! LOKI, WHEREVER YOU ARE, YOU'VE WON! YOU HAVE... *WAIT!* THAT VOICE... IT'S *WHITNEY!*
DELLA, SEND A TELEGRAM TO ARNOLD SIMMS IN NEW YORK!
RIGHT, CHIEF!
TELL HIM I'LL SELL BEAUTY MAGAZINE TO HIM... ON CONDITION HE KEEPS *YOU* AS EDITOR!
WHITNEY! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? YOU KNOW THAT SIMMS IS A *CHEAT* AND A *SCOUNDREL!* HE'LL *RUIN* OUR MAGAZINE!
CHIEF, DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT THAT DAME'S BACK AGAIN!
SNOOPING, SNOOPING! ALWAYS SNOOPING!
WHAT'S IT TO *YOU*, ANYWAY? IT'S *MY* MAGAZINE!
BUT SIMMS WILL TURN IT INTO A RAG! YOU'VE ALWAYS REFUSED TO SELL IT TO HIM! OH... WHITNEY, MY DARLING... WHY HAVE YOU CHANGED? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
SUDDENLY WHITNEY'S FACE TURNS INTO A LEER.. EVIL... SINISTER!
BE QUIET! THAT'S HOW I WANT IT!
WHITNEY! YOUR.. YOUR *FACE!*
HURMPH! NOW SHE DOESN'T EVEN LIKE YOUR *FACE!* MY GOODNESS! ISN'T SHE THE UPPITTY ONE?
THEN VENUS REALIZES... HER SEARCH FOR LOKI IS OVER!
OH... NO! NO! NOT *WHITNEY!* BUT... IT'S TRUE... *LOKI HAS ENTERED WHITNEY'S BODY!*
COME, WHITNEY DEAR! NOW SHE'S TRYING *TEARS!* WHAT AN ACTRESS!
SEND THIS WIRE, PLEASE!
TELEGRA


ER...MR. HAMMOND CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT SENDING THAT WIRE! MAY I HAVE IT, PLEASE?
CERTAINLY, MISS VENUS... IF *YOU* SAY SO!
HMMM... (SIGH!)
I COULDN'T LET THAT TELEGRAM GET TO SIMMS! WHITNEY'S NOT HIMSELF...HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING! IT'S NOT WHITNEY-- IT'S *LOKI!*
NIGHT COMES TO THE GREAT CITY OF NEW ORLEANS! THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES UNTIL THE SMALL HOURS...AND ONLY ONE PERSON IS AWARE OF THE GREAT DANGER...AND THAT PERSON IS HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT...
ALL NIGHT LONG SHE SITS OUT ON HER BALCONY... STARING AT THE OMNIPOTENT CLOUD OF DARKNESS ...THINKING! AND THEN...
DAWN... AT LAST! AND THERE IS MY FRIEND... APOLLO, THE SUN! APOLLO! HELP ME! HELP ME!
APOLLO, HANDSOMEST AND MOST GLORIOUS OF THE GODS, RISES IN THE SKY IN THE SHAPE OF THE SUN! BUT JUST ABOVE HIM IS...*THE CLOUD!*
BUT EVEN AS SHE APPEALS TO APOLLO, VENUS SEES IT IS HOPELESS! THE BRILLIANT SUN IS SWALLOWED UP AND HIDDEN BY LOKI'S CLOUD!
ALL IS LOST! EVEN APOLLO IS VANQUISHED BY LOKI!


SUDDENLY THERE IS A BLAZING PRESENCE BEFORE HER!
WHAT... WHO IS IT? SPEAK, BRIGHT BEING!
APOLLO! YOU! YOU HEARD ME!
YES! AND I AM ANGRY! WHAT HAS THAT EVIL GENIUS, LOKI, DONE TO ME? JUPITER IS A FOOL TO ALLOW HIM TO WREAK HAVOC THIS WAY!
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT, APOLLO! IT IS BECAUSE I WAS ALLOWED TO VISIT THE EARTH!
SO! BUT ARE YOU NOT STILL THE GODDESS OF LOVE? YOU ARE VENUS, AND... YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN BRING LOKI TO HIS KNEES! LISTEN TO MY IDEA...
YOU ARE RIGHT, APOLLO! I WILL DO AS YOU SAY...
...AND WHEN YOU SEE MY SUN BURST OUT IN ALL ITS GLORY FROM BEHIND THAT GRIM CLOUD, YOU WILL KNOW THAT THE CITY IS FREE OF LOKI'S EVIL INFLUENCE!
APOLLO VANISHES AND VENUS HEARS TWO VOICES IN THE COURTYARD BENEATH HER BALCONY...
YES, WHITNEY, YOU'VE CHANGED! BUT ALTHOUGH YOU'VE GOTTEN RID OF VENUS, I DON'T KNOW IF I LIKE THE CHANGE IN YOU!
YOU'RE NOT... AFRAID, ARE YOU, DELLA? DON'T WORRY-- YOU'LL SOON LEARN TO LIKE THE NEW WHITNEY HAMMOND! HA! HA! HA!
GIVE ME POWER, O MIGHTY JUPITER! HELP ME IN THIS, MY GREATEST TASK OF ALL TIME!
DOES JUPITER HEAR?... OR IS HE STILL DEAF TO VENUS'S PLEA?


JUST THEN A VOICE, SOOTHING AND TEMPTING, WHISPERS INTO WHITNEY'S EAR...
LOKI, WHY IS A GREAT GOD SUCH AS YOU WASTING YOURSELF ON THIS WENCH?
EH? WHAT'S THAT?
WHAT'S WHAT? I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING!
YOU DESERVE THE ADORATION OF THE QUEEN OF LOVE... *VENUS!*
THAT IS *TRUE!* BUT I NEVER DARED HOPE...
WHAT? WHAT IS TRUE? WHITNEY, YOU'RE BABBLING *NONSENSE!*
VENUS HAS MADE HERSELF INVISIBLE! ONLY THE SPIRIT OF LOKI IS AWARE OF HER PRESENCE!
HEY! WHAT GOES ON? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
WAIT! NO, I CANNOT LOVE YOU AS LONG AS YOU POSSESS THAT MORTAL BODY! I WANT LOKI HIMSELF! THEN I WILL SHARE HIS THRONE WITH HIM!
SEE, LOKI! HERE I AM! *COME TO ME!*
VENUS! I NEVER DREAMED...
THAT LIGHT! WHERE'D IT COME FROM? IT'S...IT'S *BLINDING* ME!
AND THE EVIL SPIRIT OF LOKI LEAVES WHITNEY HAMMOND'S BODY...
COME, VENUS... TO MY UNDERWORLD!
FAREWEL! WHITNEY... FOREVER!
FREE OF THE SPIRIT OF LOKI, WHITNEY IS HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN!
DELLA! WHAT AM I DOING HERE? *WHERE'S VENUS?*
DON'T TELL ME YOU DON'T REMEMBER? YOU CHASED HER AWAY... AND YOU SOLD THE MAGAZINE! YOU'VE BEEN ACTING VERY STRANGE!
ME? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S ACTING STRANGE! CHASE VENUS AWAY? SELL THE MAGAZINE? THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!* SHE'S THE *ONLY GIRL* IN MY LIFE AND I'LL *NEVER* SELL BEAUTY MAGAZINE!
BAH! I KNEW IT COULDN'T LAST!


BUT WHITNEY'S AWAKENING IS TOO LATE! VENUS HAS PLEDGED HERSELF TO LOKI... AND THEY ARE SPEEDING TOWARD THE KINGDOM OF FIRE!
I NEVER KNEW I COULD WIN YOU, VENUS! WHY THIS AFFECTION FOR ONE WHOM ALL THE GODS DESPISE?
I HAVE NO LOVE FOR YOU, LOKI! BUT I AM WILLING TO SACRIFICE MYSELF TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM YOUR REIGN OF HATE!
SUDDENLY... JUPITER APPEARS!
JUPITER! KING OF THE GODS!
YOU! WHAT DO YOU SEEK?
VENUS, YOU ARE A TRUE GODDESS! YOU HAVE PROVEN TO BE UNSELFISH-- FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND! SO YOU ARE FREE OF YOUR PROMISE TO LOKI! RETURN TO EARTH!
NO! YOU CANNOT DO THIS! SHE IS MINE... MINE!
SILENCE, FIEND! NOTHING IS YOURS EXCEPT YOUR KINGDOM OF FIRE TO WHICH YOU ARE CONDEMNED FOREVER! GO, VENUS! HE AWAITS YOU!
THANK YOU, LORD JUPITER! YOU ARE GOOD... AND VERY JUST!
THE NEXT INSTANT VENUS IS STANDING IN THE COURTYARD!
I'VE LOST HER! I'VE LOST VENUS! WHY... WHY DID SHE LEAVE ME? I'VE BEEN IN A DAZE... A FEARFUL DAZE... AS IF I WERE ASLEEP! SOMEHOW I DROVE HER AWAY FROM ME!
WHITNEY...
VENUS! OH, MY DARLING! YOU'RE BACK! I THOUGHT I HAD LOST YOU FOREVER! WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT CAUSED ALL THAT CONFUSION IN MY MIND?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, DEAR! IT'S ALL OVER NOW! YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW CLOSE WE WERE TO... BUT NEVER MIND! HOLD ME, WHITNEY! HOLD ME AND SAY YOU LOVE ME!
AND AS THE TWO LOVERS FIND PEACE AT LAST, THE GLORIOUS SUN BURSTS THROUGH THE BLACK CLOUD! APOLLO ONCE AGAIN IS IN HIS HEAVEN AND ALL'S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD!
THE END

A TRUE-TO-LIFE ROMANCE

"STOLEN LOVE!"

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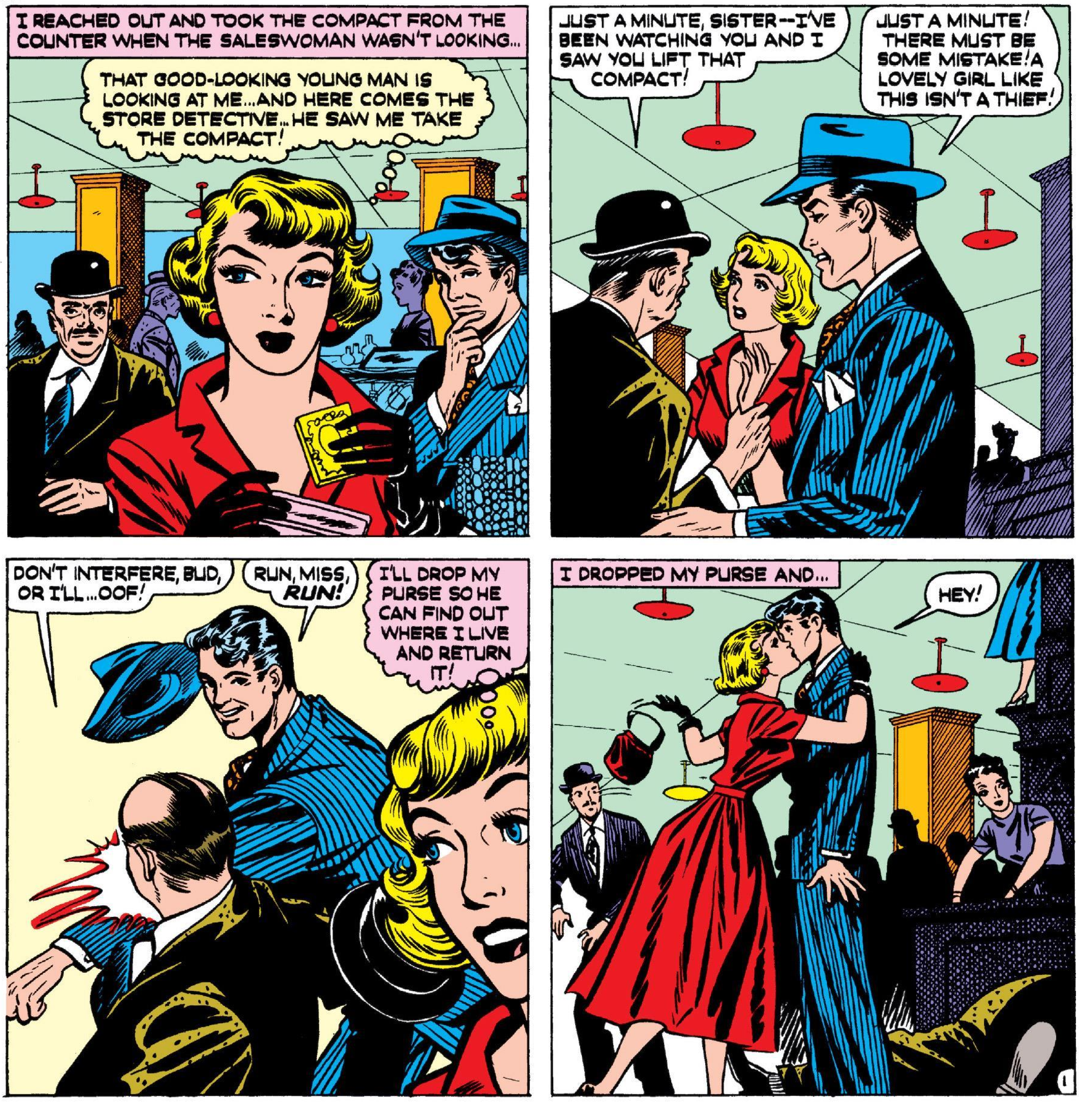
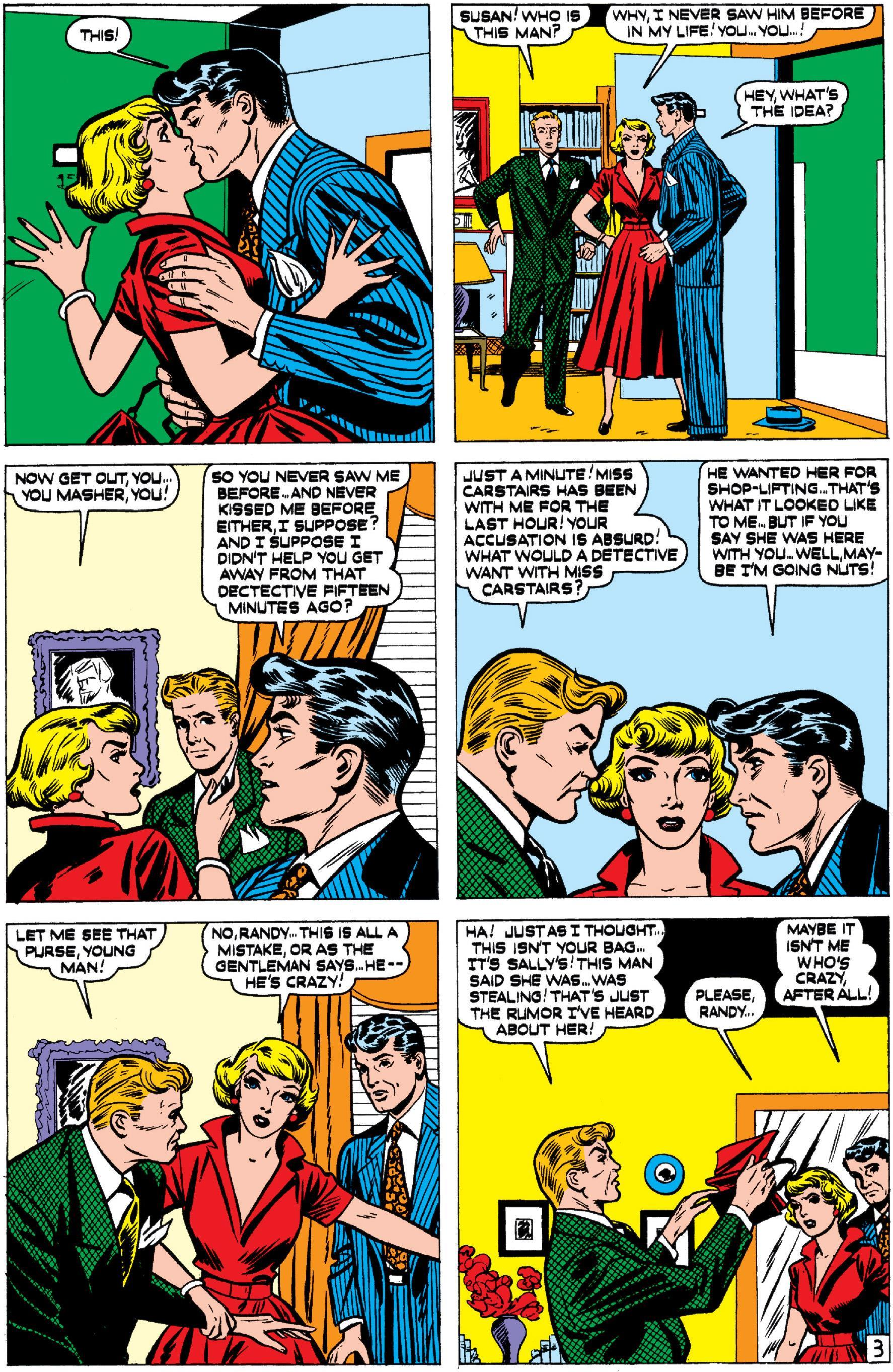
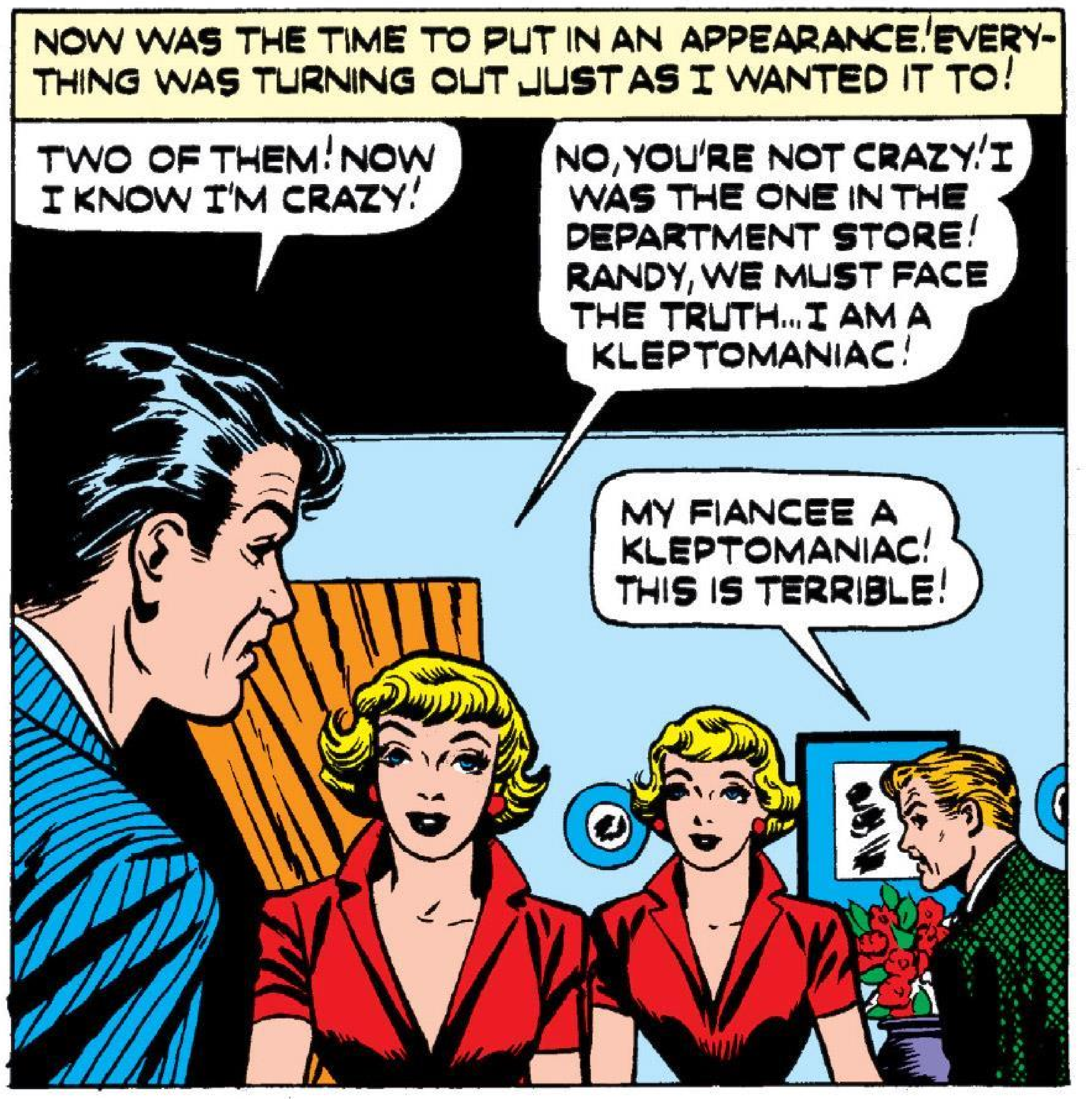
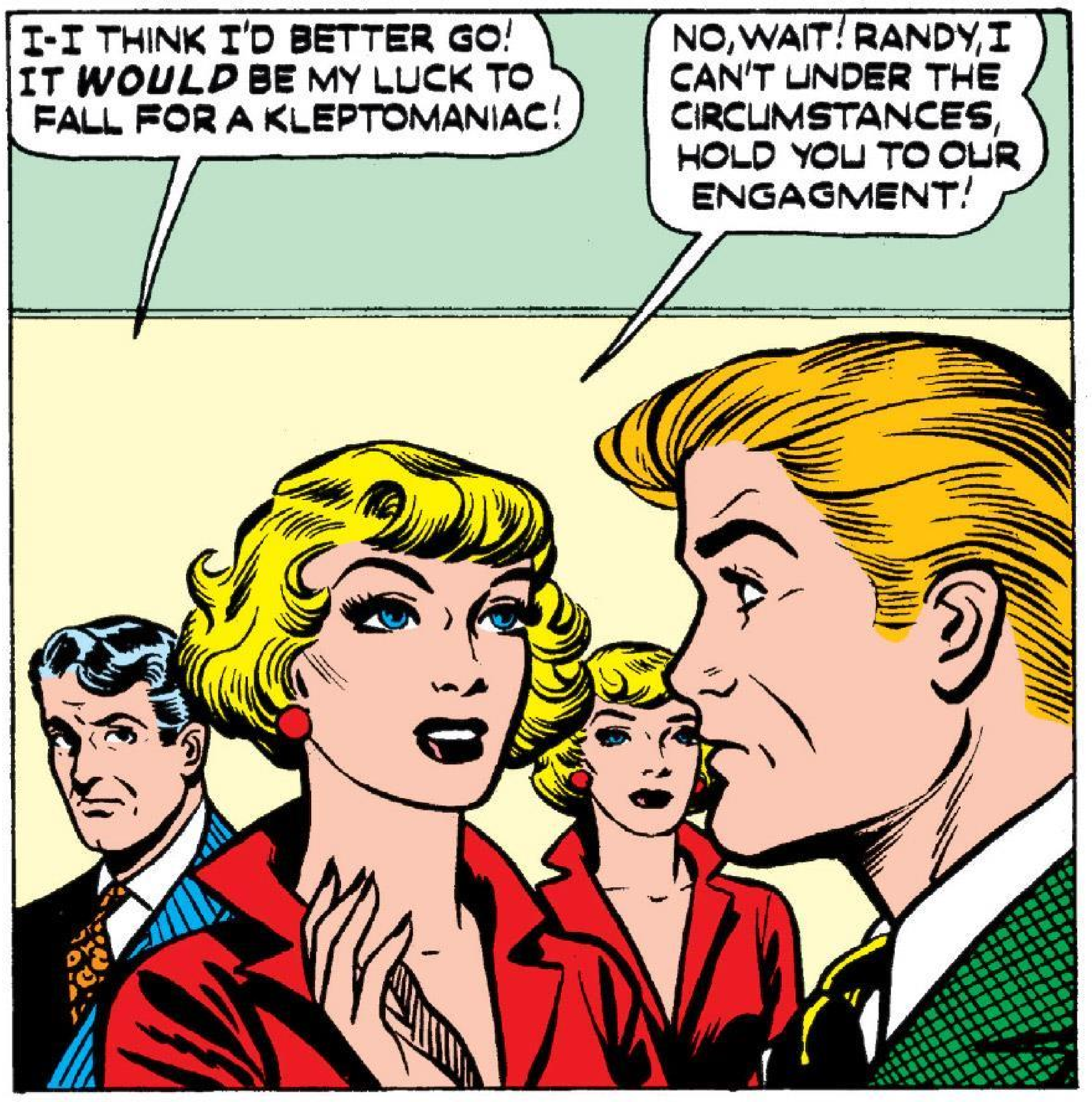
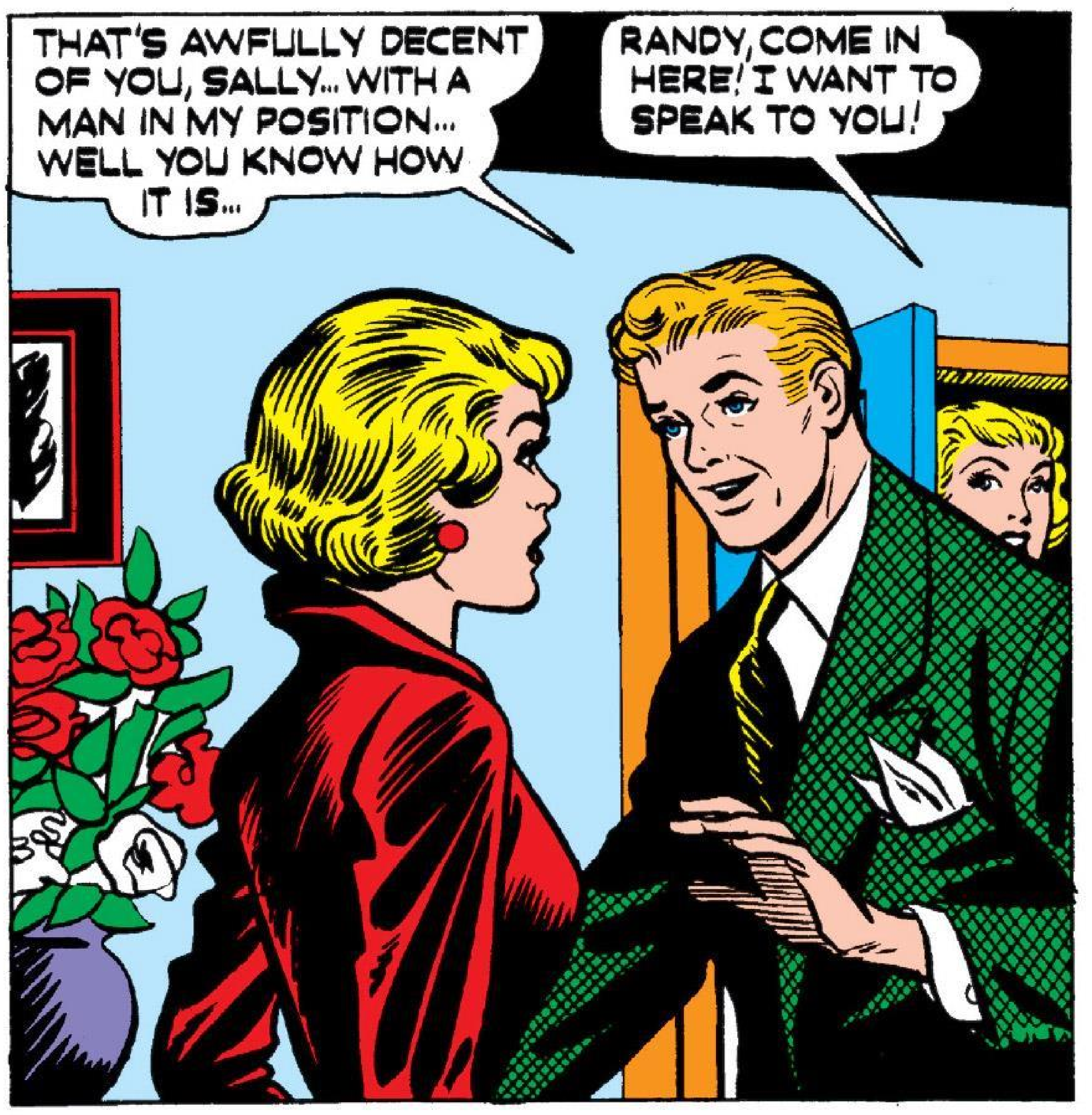

I REACHED OUT AND TOOK THE COMPACT FROM THE COUNTER WHEN THE SALESWOMAN WASN'T LOOKING...
THAT GOOD-LOOKING YOUNG MAN IS LOOKING AT ME...AND HERE COMES THE STORE DETECTIVE...HE SAW ME TAKE THE COMPACT!
JUST A MINUTE, SISTER--I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU AND I SAW YOU LIFT THAT COMPACT!
JUST A MINUTE! THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE! A LOVELY GIRL LIKE THIS ISN'T A THIEF!
DON'T INTERFERE, BUD, OR I'LL...OOF!
RUN, MISS, *RUN!*
I'LL DROP MY PURSE SO HE CAN FIND OUT WHERE I LIVE AND RETURN IT!
I DROPPED MY PURSE AND...
HEY!

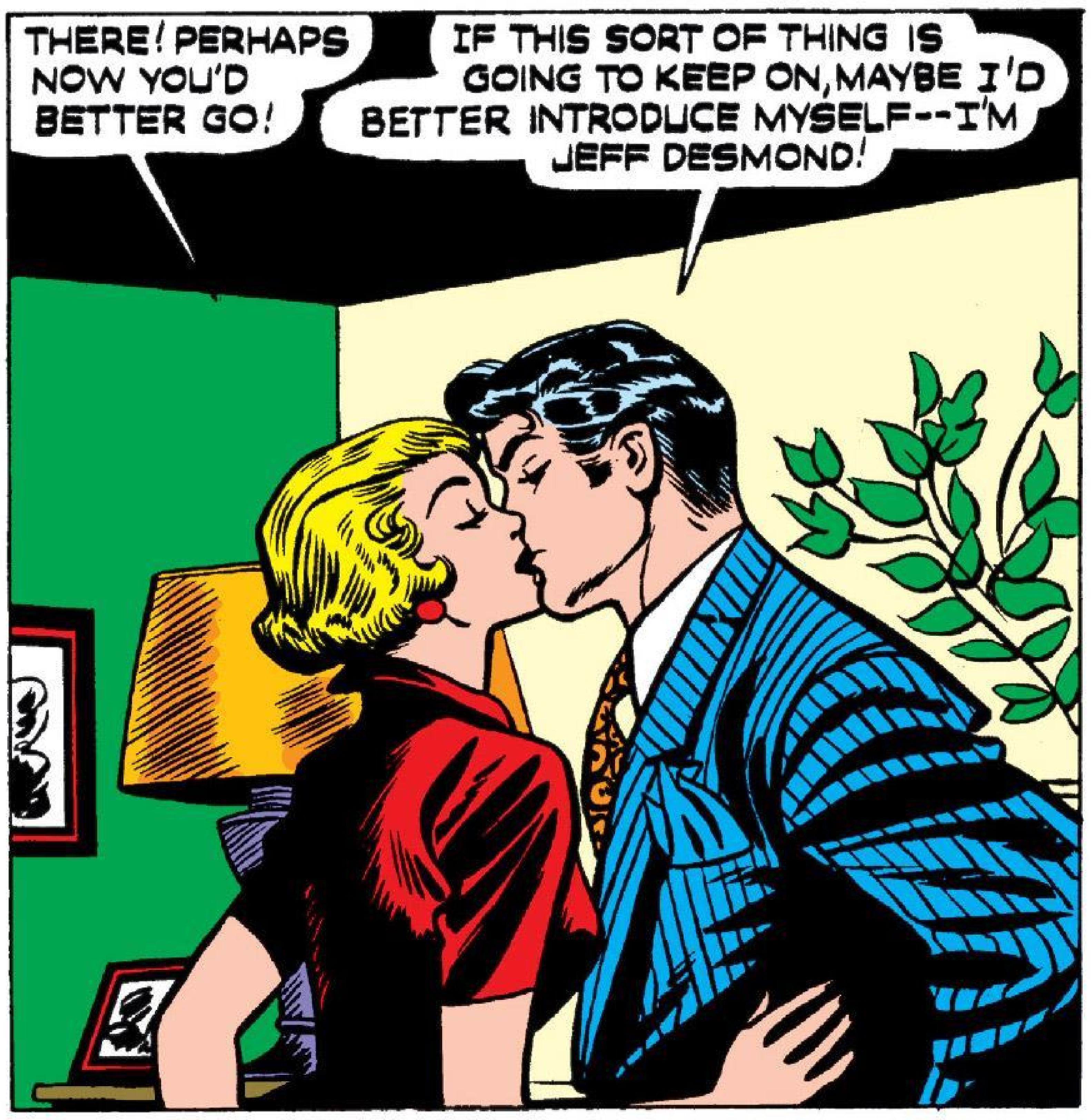
I TURNED AND RAN! AS I REACHED THE DOOR, I PAUSED FOR A MOMENT TO SEE IF THE YOUNG MAN WAS GETTING AWAY...
GOOD! HE'S FOUND MY PURSE!
THEN I HURRIED HOME TO MY APARTMENT!
GOLLY, HE WAS HANDSOME! I HOPE HE RETURNS THE PURSE SOON... WHEN RANDY AND SUSAN ARE HOME!
I HAD ENTERED THE APARTMENT BY THE *SIDE* DOOR AND I COULD HEAR SUSAN, MY TWIN SISTER, TALKING TO RANDY CHANDLER, MY FIANCE, IN THE FRONT ROOM... TALKING ABOUT ME!
SALLY SAID SHE'D BE HERE! I'VE HEARD SOME STRANGE GOSSIP ABOUT SALLY, AND EVEN THOUGH WE'RE ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED, I...
NOW, RANDY, YOU MUSTN'T LISTEN TO GOSSIP! OH! THERE'S THE TELEPHONE!
RINO
FROM THE DESCRIPTION, IT WAS YOUR SISTER, MISS CARSTAIRS! THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME, YOU KNOW...
YES, YES, I KNOW! OH DEAR, I'LL CALL YOU BACK LATER!
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT, SUSAN?
NOTHING, RANDY, NOTHING AT ALL... OH, THERE'S SOME-ONE AT THE DOOR!
REMEMBER ME? I CAME TO RETURN TWO THINGS TO YOU! THIS, AND...

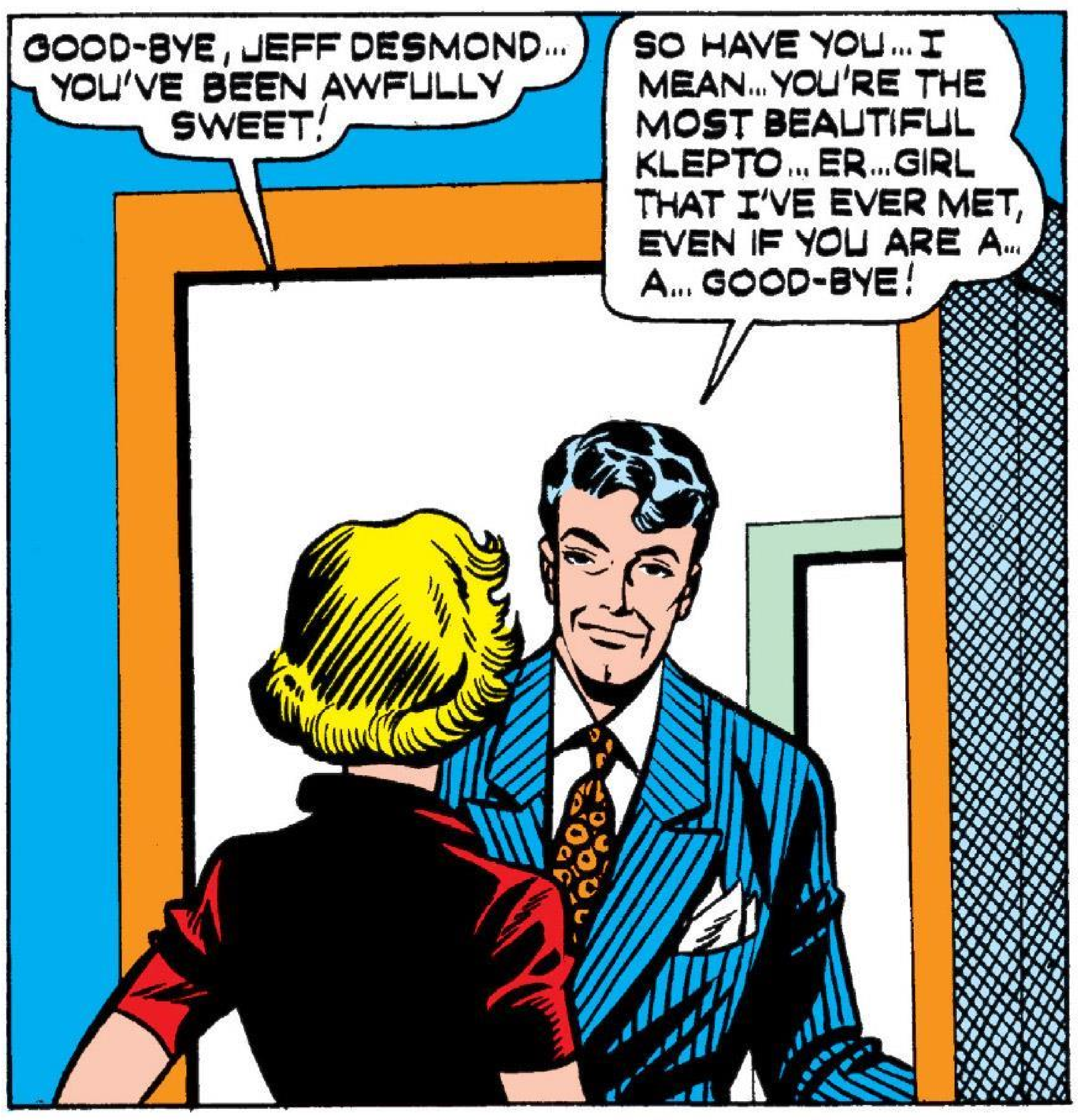

THIS!
SUSAN! WHO IS THIS MAN?
WHY, I NEVER SAW HIM BEFORE IN MY LIFE! YOU... YOU...!
HEY, WHAT'S THE IDEA?
NOW GET OUT, YOU... YOU MASHER, YOU!
SO YOU NEVER SAW ME BEFORE... AND NEVER KISSED ME BEFORE EITHER, I SUPPOSE? AND I SUPPOSE I DIDN'T HELP YOU GET AWAY FROM THAT DECTECTIVE FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO?
JUST A MINUTE! MISS CARSTAIRS HAS BEEN WITH ME FOR THE LAST HOUR! YOUR ACCUSATION IS ABSURD! WHAT WOULD A DETECTIVE WANT WITH MISS CARSTAIRS?
HE WANTED HER FOR SHOP-LIFTING... THAT'S WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE TO ME... BUT IF YOU SAY SHE WAS HERE WITH YOU... WELL, MAY-BE I'M GOING NUTS!
LET ME SEE THAT PURSE, YOUNG MAN!
NO, RANDY... THIS IS ALL A MISTAKE, OR AS THE GENTLEMAN SAYS... HE -- HE'S CRAZY!
HA! JUST AS I THOUGHT... THIS ISN'T YOUR BAG... IT'S SALLY'S! THIS MAN SAID SHE WAS... WAS STEALING! THAT'S JUST THE RUMOR I'VE HEARD ABOUT HER!
PLEASE, RANDY...
MAYBE IT ISN'T ME WHO'S CRAZY, AFTER ALL!

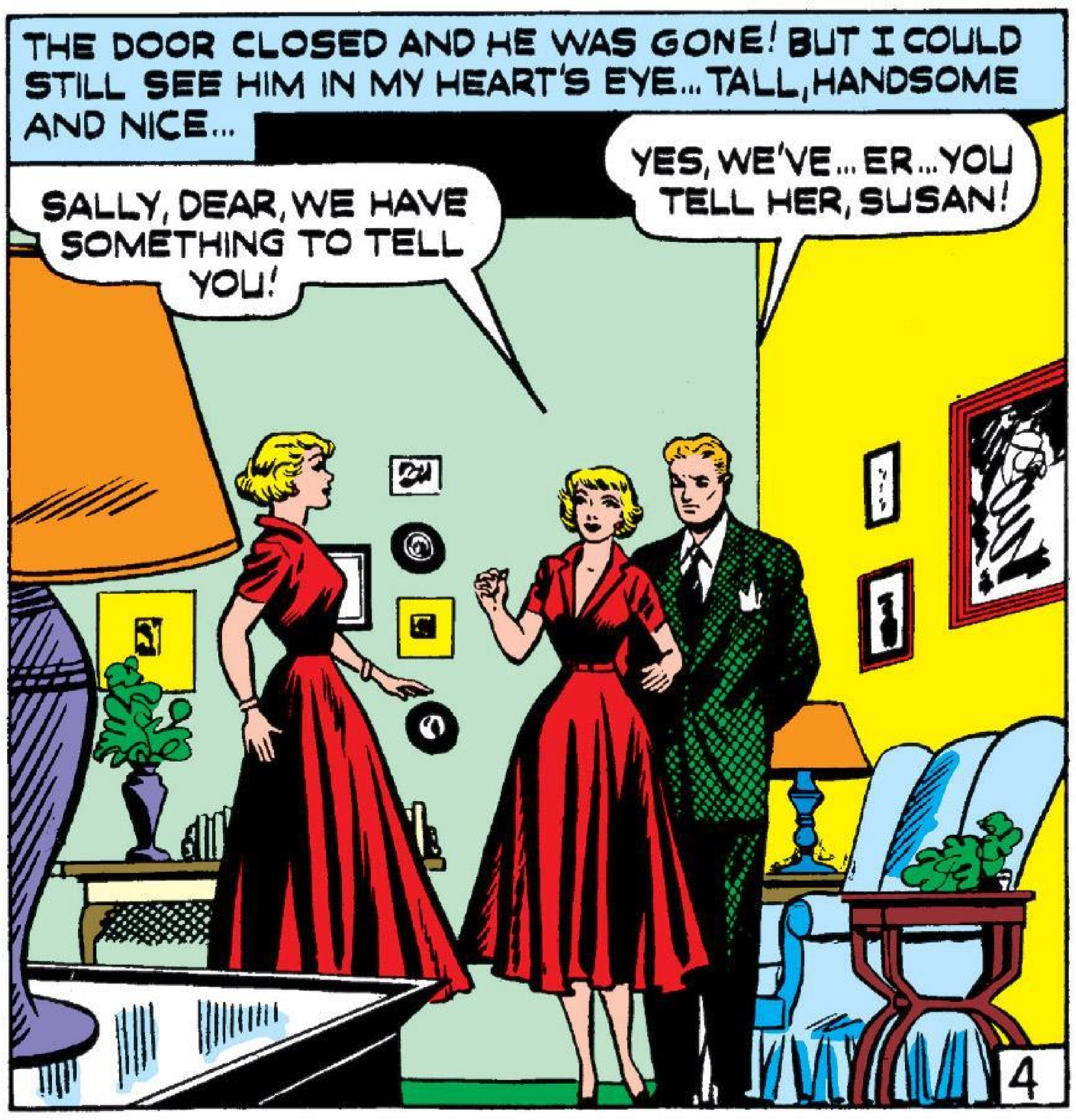

NOW WAS THE TIME TO PUT IN AN APPEARANCE! EVERYTHING WAS TURNING OUT JUST AS I WANTED IT TO!
TWO OF THEM! NOW I KNOW I'M CRAZY!
NO, YOU'RE NOT CRAZY! I WAS THE ONE IN THE DEPARTMENT STORE! RANDY, WE MUST FACE THE TRUTH...I AM A KLEPTOMANIAC!
MY FIANCEE A KLEPTOMANIAC! THIS IS TERRIBLE!

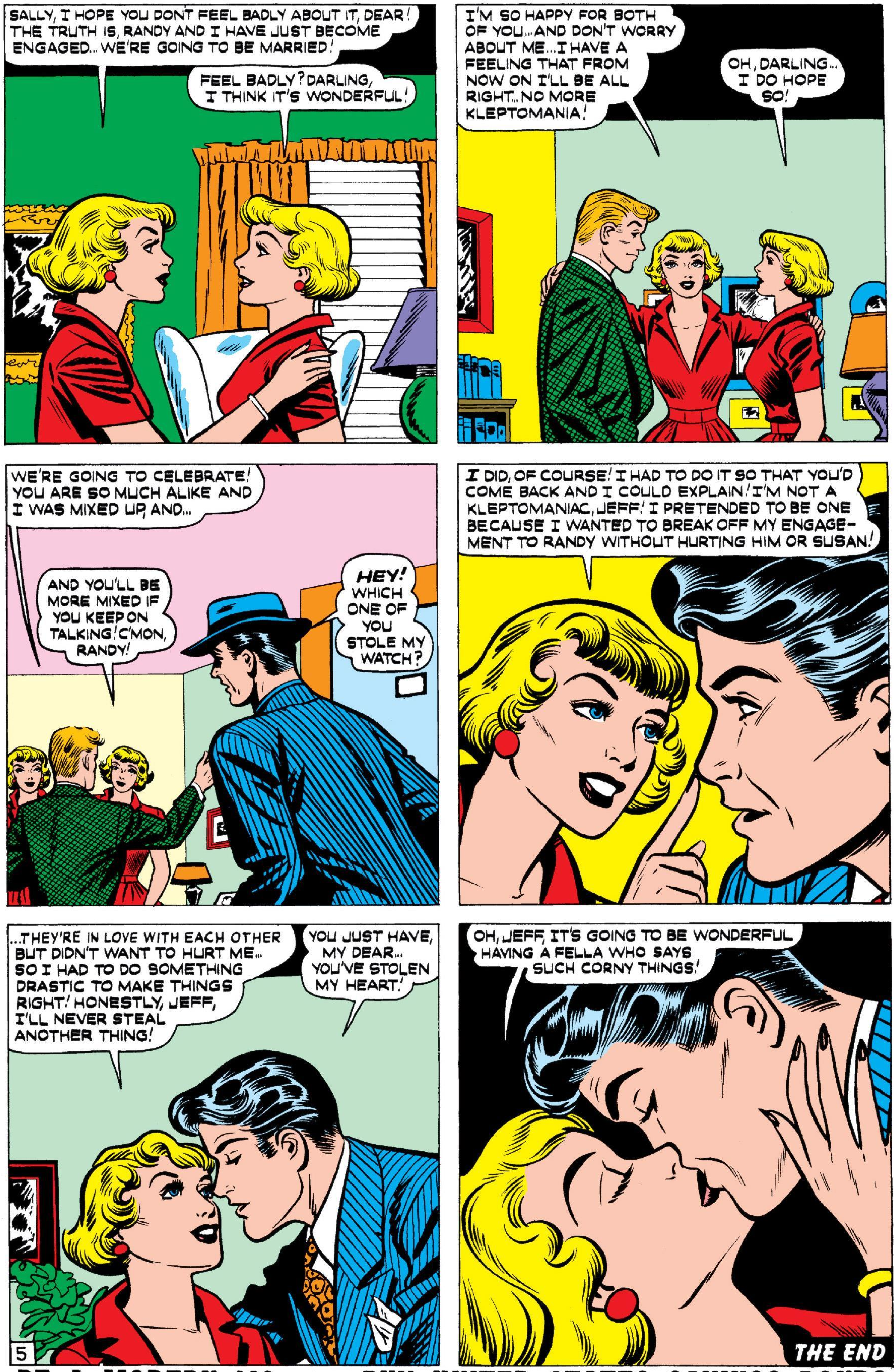

I-I THINK I'D BETTER GO! IT *WOULD* BE MY LUCK TO FALL FOR A KLEPTOMANIAC!
NO, WAIT! RANDY, I CAN'T UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HOLD YOU TO OUR ENGAGMENT!


THAT'S AWFULLY DECENT OF YOU, SALLY... WITH A MAN IN MY POSITION... WELL YOU KNOW HOW IT IS...
RANDY, COME IN HERE! I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU!


THERE! PERHAPS NOW YOU'D BETTER GO!
IF THIS SORT OF THING IS GOING TO KEEP ON, MAYBE I'D BETTER INTRODUCE MYSELF--I'M JEFF DESMOND!


GOOD-BYE, JEFF DESMOND... YOU'VE BEEN AWFULLY SWEET!
SO HAVE YOU... I MEAN... YOU'RE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL KLEPTO... ER... GIRL THAT I'VE EVER MET, EVEN IF YOU ARE A... A... GOOD-BYE!


THE DOOR CLOSED AND HE WAS GONE! BUT I COULD STILL SEE HIM IN MY HEART'S EYE... TALL, HANDSOME AND NICE...
SALLY, DEAR, WE HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU!
YES, WE'VE... ER... YOU TELL HER, SUSAN!


SALLY, I HOPE YOU DONT FEEL BADLY ABOUT IT, DEAR! THE TRUTH IS, RANDY AND I HAVE JUST BECOME ENGAGED... WE'RE GOING TO BE MARRIED!
FEEL BADLY? DARLING, I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL!
I'M SO HAPPY FOR BOTH OF YOU... AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME... I HAVE A FEELING THAT FROM NOW ON I'LL BE ALL RIGHT... NO MORE KLEPTOMANIA!
OH, DARLING... I DO HOPE SO!
WE'RE GOING TO CELEBRATE! YOU ARE SO MUCH ALIKE AND I WAS MIXED UP, AND...
AND YOU'LL BE MORE MIXED IF YOU KEEP ON TALKING! C'MON, RANDY!
HEY! WHICH ONE OF YOU STOLE MY WATCH?
I DID, OF COURSE! I HAD TO DO IT SO THAT YOU'D COME BACK AND I COULD EXPLAIN! I'M NOT A KLEPTOMANIAC, JEFF! I PRETENDED TO BE ONE BECAUSE I WANTED TO BREAK OFF MY ENGAGEMENT TO RANDY WITHOUT HURTING HIM OR SUSAN!
...THEY'RE IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER BUT DIDN'T WANT TO HURT ME... SO I HAD TO DO SOMETHING DRASTIC TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT! HONESTLY, JEFF, I'LL NEVER STEAL ANOTHER THING!
YOU JUST HAVE, MY DEAR... YOU'VE STOLEN MY HEART!
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OH, JEFF, IT'S GOING TO BE WONDERFUL HAVING A FELLA WHO SAYS SUCH CORNY THINGS!
THE END